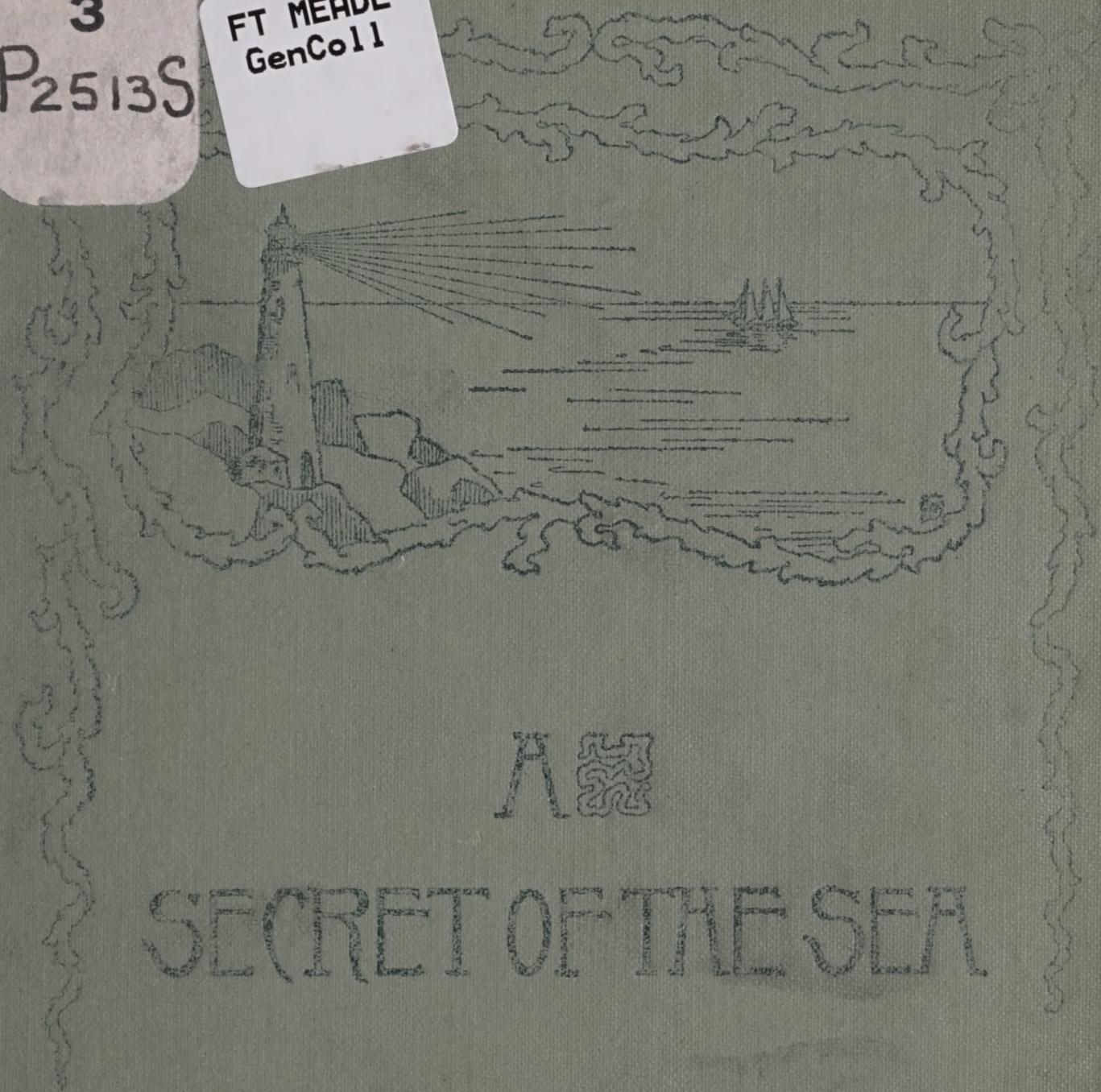


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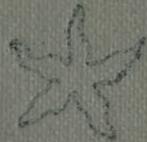
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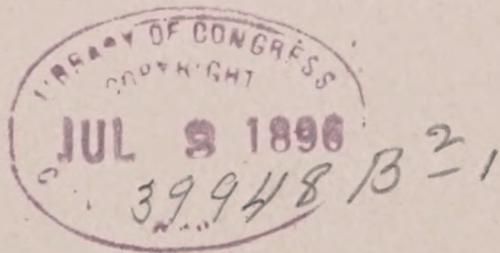


A SECRET OF THE SEA.

BY

CORNELIA MITCHELL PARSONS.

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TO MY MOTHER

I dedicate this story, in memory of her grandfather, Timothy Ruggles Green, who, in the year 1812, while accompanying Mrs. Allston, née Theodosia Burr, to the North, so mysteriously perished. The ship on which they embarked was never heard from.

The sea keeps its own secret.

(3)

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.

“The island lies nine leagues away
Along its solitary shore,
Of craggy rock and sandy beach,
No sound but ocean’s roar,
Save where the bold wild sea bird makes her home,
Her shrill cry coming through the sparkling foam.”

“WHAT a fearful night it is, father! I have been listening to the howling of the wind and the beating of the waves on the rocks,—until every thought of sleep has fled.”

The words were softly spoken by a fair-haired girl of about seventeen; she was reclining on a lounge, which stood in one corner of the little sitting-room.

Captain Burton, for such was the father’s name, was a large, squarely built man of medium height. His piercing gray eyes and thick overhanging brows, from under which he looked out into the world, gave him somewhat a sinister expression. His hair was iron-gray, and a short stubby beard gave squareness to the terraced chin. His mouth

was large, the corners somewhat drawn down. One would be apt to remark that the man never smiled.

He had been reading; the fingers of his right hand, which by the way, were encased in a black kid glove, were partially hidden between the pages of the book. As his daughter spoke, he glanced out into the night. No word fell from his lips, but as the howling of the wind increased, an uneasy mournful expression passed over his features.

"Mother used to say," the girl continued, "that the roar of the waves beating on the rocks soothed and rested her. I wish I could feel as she did, that they brought messages from far away lands, where winter is unknown. Ah! father, if it could only be summer always."

At the mention of the sainted mother's name, the old man moved restlessly, rubbing his left hand up and down the polished arm of the easy chair; he sighed.

"Your mother always did see beauty in everythin'. Hers was a rare nature, Theo. I never half knew her worth till she was taken from me. Aye! Aye! child," he added, musingly, "you're like her in feature. Sometimes when I look in yer eyes it seems as if my Cicily had come back to me."

A tear rolled down the wrinkled cheek, which

he hastily brushed away with the back of his left hand.

“She never answered back when I spoke rough to her—and I often did that. I’m glad she’s safe up aloft. Cicily always kept her eyes open for the danger signals. She said we was none of us safe here below, the seas was always so rough and strong. We must pray to be kept from temptations, and never stop prayin’. I didn’t heed her words, Theo. Your old father ain’t the man he’d ought to be, after havin’ such a sainted example always before him these many years.”

“Do you remember the lines mother was so fond of repeating, dear father ? ”

“Yes, Theo, say ‘em over for me.”

“‘Be patient, keep your spirits still, for storms
Are all about you, and you can not say,
Even to the highest of them, ‘Peace, be still ! ’
The skilful pilot can control the barque
But not the breeze, the rock defies the gale
Unmoved, but can not soothe it into calm.
Faith walks in night, yet is not of the night.
And Hope her fellow, looks into the east,
Where, marking the long cloud-bars, all of gold—
It says our day is up, behold the sun !

“‘Maturity of ill as well as good God waiteth for,
For unripe evil, just, as unripe good
He will not pluck ; ‘tis ripeness that He deals with.
The language of the lips is loud and hollow,
The language of the heart is deep and low.’ ”

Silence fell on both as the young girl finished the recital of the verses.

The sitting-room was not large, but there was an air of comfort that pervaded the home. The logs on the hearth sent up a cheerful blaze, and the flickering flames cast strange shadows on the most remote objects. On the centre of the mantelshelf stood a quaint old-fashioned timepiece, which solemnly ticked out the hours, and on either side there were two pieces of rose coral. In one corner of the room stood a bookcase with glass doors, through which could be seen rows of plainly bound volumes, by poet, novelist and historian. A small table, holding upon its polished surface a glass case, under which were two stuffed birds with gorgeous plumage, stood in another corner, and near it a larger table, with an oil lamp, by which sat Captain Burton. Three straight backed chairs in two stiff rows were placed on either side of the fireplace. These with the easy chair, and low couch on which Theo was reclining, formed the only furniture of the apartment.

Long after she had ceased speaking, the girl's blue eyes remained fixed upon her father's face. Her red lips would now and then tremble as a thought from out of the happy past rose to her mind, and her eyes had a far away look in them. At last the face grew composed, the lines of thought softened, her regular breathing kept time

with the ticking of the clock. She had fallen asleep.

An hour passed. Roused from his reverie by the violence of the wind, which seemed to shake the house at its very foundations, the captain walked to the side of the lounge, and lifting his daughter in his strong arms, carried the sleeping girl through the dark entry up the stairway to her chamber. Here he laid her tenderly down on the little white bed, carefully spreading a shawl over her.

"Poor tired child," he said to himself; "I'm glad she sleeps. Bad dreams can't disturb my pure Theo's sweet repose. The gale grows a bit worse every moment. God have mercy on any vessel that plows the waves to-night!"

He passed his black gloved hand thoughtfully across his brow. Then shrugging his shoulders as if he longed in like manner to throw off the thing that troubled him, he made his way down the stairs, and reentered the little sitting-room. Here the captain remained standing for a few moments, as if buried in thought. He crossed the room to the bookcase, fumbled in his pocket, pulled out a brass key, fitted it into the lock of a lower drawer, turned it, and slowly drew the drawer out.

It was filled with curios of all kinds, which had evidently been brought from many foreign shores.

There were bead necklaces of Syrian workmanship, Egyptian baskets of various forms, grotesque Chinese idols, carved ivory chessmen and bits of gold chain, odd rings of curious workmanship, containing diamonds and other precious stones—besides a box of old-fashioned brooches, earrings, bracelets and other trinkets.

After handling several of the rings, Captain Burton seemed at last to find that for which he was searching. It was a ring containing two opals and one large diamond in the centre, the setting of which was somewhat antique. He advanced to the larger table and held the trinket up to the light—the opals glowed like fire. He turned it in his fingers and glanced at the inner side of the narrow band. There were two initials engraved on the gold ; they were B. and A., and with many little flourishes and curves were intertwined. The face of the man worked convulsively—his hand shook—the ring fell on the soft carpeted floor, making no sound.

“Oh, my God ! must I bear this agony always, always !” he cried. “They haunt me, her eyes—they follow me !” The old clock ticked in reply, “Always, always, always—they will follow you.”

“Not always ! I can not,” he stopped. “I must ! My Theo, I must live for her.”

Great beads of perspiration rested on his forehead, as with clenched hands he stood—a man

alone with God—with a conscience that would not be silenced. The past ever before him—the sin that nothing could shut out from his view—no nothing—he must live on and bear the consequences.

With a weary sigh Captain Burton stooped down, picked up the ring and laid it in the drawer, which he locked, slipping the key into his pocket.

Again, a strange shadow passed over the face of the man. He had lifted the oil lamp, but remained quite motionless, holding it in his hands.

"I must have some extra change," he muttered, "Joe 'll soon be returnin'."

He passed out of the room. The wind howled, a stray gust blew so strongly down the chimney, that a loosened brick fell with a dull thud on the hearth amid a shower of soot. He turned, but did not retrace his steps, and entered the kitchen which was on the other side of the little hallway. The cupboard doors were closed. Captain Burton opened them and took from one of the neatly papered shelves, a loaf of white bread. From this he cut three or four slices and buttered them. He then made a cup of tea, placed the bread on a tin platter, on which were some salted herrings, and carried the eatables into the woodshed, returning to the kitchen for the lamp which he placed on an old oaken chest in the corner. "I came

near forgettin' the poor creature. Joe seems to think she looks to be in a better condition each time he sees her."

The back part of the shed appeared to be partitioned off. There was a door leading into the enclosure ; this the captain unlocked, carefully pushed in the tin platter and the cup of tea, remarking as he did so :

"I guess the creature is sleepin'. It must be pretty late."

He closed the door quietly, locked it, and dropped the key into his deep jacket pocket. On one side of the shed piled up on the floor were a number of logs ready to be sawn, and near by a smaller heap of wood neatly split up into pieces of uniform length for the winter supply.

No ax or saw were to be seen. A door from this room led to another extension, in which fish and meats were salted and dried, here also the process of dunning* was gone through with year after year.

After a few minutes, Captain Burton passed into the smokehouse, and soon reappeared with a rusty iron pick. He then began slowly to pry up three of the boards from the floor. As these were lifted from their places a rocky surface was

* Dunning was carried on by the fishermen of the Shoals for many years. A dunfish is a handsome creature. It is cut in transparent stripes, the color of brown sherry wine. The process is a tedious one.

exposed—the cottage evidently rested on a strong foundation. The old man satisfied with the result of his labor, rose slowly to his feet, passed to a corner of the room and took down from a nail a lantern which he lighted. Again he stooped and carefully examined the rocky surface, holding the lantern over the opening. The light fell upon an iron ring large enough to admit of a man's three fingers; this was fastened to a circular piece of wood. Raising this, the opening revealed a short flight of steps cut out of the solid rock. Descending these, he reached a cave, the rocky roof of which was high enough to permit a person to stand upright. The lantern burnt dimly. In the Egyptian darkness nothing at first could be distinguished. Captain Burton was evidently not a stranger in the subterranean chamber. The rocks were worn away in places, showing that the sea had in some past age been there as well. The walls were damp and black.

The light fell upon three well filled canvas bags, and two old chests, such as seamen would be likely to use—these stood in one corner of the cave.

The captain placed the lantern on the floor, and with some difficulty, began to untie a cord which bound the neck of one of the bags. Opening it he lifted the lantern high up, the light fell upon hundreds of gold coins of various sizes. Some of

them glistened, while others appeared green and mouldy, but all bore a foreign impress.

For a moment the old man remained lost in thought. He took several of the coins, one by one, in his fingers and carefully examined each in turn.

“ ‘Tis lucky I’ve enough to last me all my days. Theo shall never want; she need know nothin’ about the history !” He stopped. “ Cicily was that curious always as to how I got so much money, and where I kept it, but I never told her. She believed in me, and the little one’s like her, she’ll believe too.”

He took a large leathern pouch from his pocket and filled it with as many of the gold pieces as it would comfortably hold, counting them one by one as he did so. Now and then he would look behind him as if expecting some mysterious presence to snatch them from his grasp. Retying the bag, he placed it beside the others, and dropped the pouch into his pocket. Then picking up the lantern, he made his way up the stone steps to the opening in the floor, replaced the boards, blew out the light, and passed with the lamp into the kitchen, locking the door behind him.

As the captain entered the sitting-room, his eyes fell upon the brass face of the clock; the ivory hands pointed to two. “ ‘Tis growin’ late—I must go aloft and turn in for the night,” he muttered.

CHAPTER II.

"The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day."

IT was a morning late in September. The mists rose slowly into the western sky—great towers and columns of mist—pure and white, their tops touched by Aurora's rosy finger. A slight breeze caused rifts here and there in the wonderful fleecy structure, tearing into shreds some of the largest clouds, which floated away to various parts of the heavens, revealing between great stretches of blue. The sun in all his glory burst forth, shining on the stretch of purple waters beyond, where the New Hampshire coast line could be clearly traced, then glimpses of the white beach, a few scattered houses, and beyond a background of forest lands.

The Isles of Shoals in the early morning light, looked gray and rugged. Nine miles of the scintillating Atlantic stretched between them and the nearest shores of New Hampshire, while to the northwest twenty-one miles away could be seen the outlines of Cape Ann in Massachusetts, and sixteen miles to the southeast, Cape Neddock in Maine.

The group received its name, not because of

the ragged bluffs or reefs, but on account of the "schoaling" or "schooling" of fish about them in the mackerel and herring season. At low tide six islands can be seen, while at high tide, eight or even nine. A breakwater connects two of them. Appledore or Hog Island is the largest of the group, so called from its resemblance to a hog's back. It has about four hundred acres, and a narrow valley divides the land into two unequal parts. Next in the chain is Holey's Island or "Smutty Nose"; at low tide Cedar and Malaga are connected with it. "Anderson's Rock," off the southeast corner is not far removed. One quarter of a mile away, lies Star Island with its one hundred and fifty acres, on which can be seen the houses of the little village of Gosport, with a tiny church appearing on one of the highest rocks. Then comes White Island, the most picturesque of all, with its warning light. This is connected with Seaveys', and at low water both cover an area of twenty acres. The most westerly of the group is "Londoner's," with its beautiful shell beach. Toward the west, "Round Rock" adds to the picturesqueness of this island. There are two others in the group, which are much dreaded by seamen, as they lie below the surface of the sea. These are "Devil's Rock," off White Island, and "Old Harry" four miles east of Appledore.

Duck Island, the scene of our story, is the

most remote, and is situated about two miles northeast of Appledore. Its treacherous ledges run toward the west and north—beneath the surface of the water, one of them being half a mile long. At the east and south, the shore is bolder. Shag and Mingo, two large rocks over which the sea breaks with great violence, are separated from the main island by a narrow channel.

On this particular morning, the purple asters could be seen among the rocks, while clusters of golden rod waved their plumes, standing as heralds to announce the coming autumn. The cry of the curlew and the plover are heard, and white winged sea gulls skim the surface of the waves, or lighting on the long black ledges, softened the hard outlines, making them look as if covered by newly fallen snow. Nestled among the rocks stood the little gray cottage of Captain Burton, undiscernible, save for the honeysuckled embowered porch, and the curling smoke which rose from the chimney, while behind and at one side lay the trim garden fairly ablaze with color. There were marigolds, larkspurs, sweetpeas of various hues, fragrant mignonette and scarlet poppies. The flowers, however, looked blown and torn, having lived through the last night's storm. They were standing with bent heads, waiting for the sunshine to dry their tears. Beside them looking like a sweet rose herself stood Theo. Her

golden hair, blown back from her white brow by the sea breeze, formed a halo of little curls around her head. A pair of deep blue eyes shadowed by their long dark lashes, looked sadly down upon the flowers she so loved. They were her best friends and knew she cared for them.

The girl was dressed in a neat cotton gown, which as the wind in eddying gusts swept up from the sea, clung in graceful folds around her trim figure, then blew in and out, in pretty undulating curves. Theo was softly singing to herself some snatches of a song she had learnt, and as she sang, the rosy lips from time to time disclosed rows of white pearls.

She started from her reverie on hearing a familiar footstep, and turning her head, met her father's stern but loving gray eyes.

"How does yer garden grow, Theo? That gale last night was strong enough to blow yer treasures away altogether. See, the sea even now is breaking over 'Shag' and 'Mingo' like a mad creature," and Captain Burton pointed with his thumb to the rocks, which were white with foam.

"My flowers, father, looked so sadly at me, I thought I would sing and cheer them up."

"I'd wager we'd have fair weather as the day drags on, the wind hails from the northwest."

"Do you think so, father? I promised Peter when he came here day before yesterday, that if

in two days the weather proved fair, I would go with him in his dory to Gosport to see old Nabbaye and Bennaye. Nabbaye is far from well, and needs looking after."

Seeing her father's lips forming themselves into a no, she continued in a coaxing way, "Mother was so fond of the old people, dear father."

"Aye! Aye! I know, but child let's go to 'Theo's Throne,' and sit there; while we do a bit of talking."

The narrow path, bordered on either side by clam shells, led down to a rock with a broad ledge, which nature had fashioned into a comfortable seat. This Captain Burton called "Theo's Throne," and would never allow any visitor to tread on the holy ground, or to invade the place. The father and daughter wandered down the little path and took their places on the rock.

Beyond, over a stretch of powdered shells, the eyes of both rested on a small white headstone, which glistened in the sunlight. On its smooth surface they read the inscription:

"Cicily Burton, beloved wife of Anthony Burton, Aged 45;" and underneath the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Such was the brief record of the life of wife and mother. It told its own story. No word was spoken. There were tears in the eyes of both.

"Theo child, I've been thinkin' it over, that

about yer goin' to Star. Yer may go. 'Tis little enough of the outside world that yer see. I know young blood needs a change now and then. Nabbaye's all right, I guess, but the fisher folk I'd have you steer clear of. They're a bad lot, the whole of them. Your mother once said the very air of Gosport was poisoned with gossip. The yarns they tell have no beginnin' and no end to them. They would try and set yer against your own father. They are not fit for yer ears, Theo, yer that I have guarded and caged like a wee bird. I am no companion for my child in book learnin' or anythin' else much. I wish your mother would come back and tell me of the mistakes I keep makin'."

The old man's eye rested again on the white headstone. A flock of sea birds hovered above with their snowy wings, and cast strange shadows on the ground, while one flew down and alighted for a moment on the stone.

"Father, do not say such cruel things of yourself. You are so near and dear to me. Mother thought all you did was right, and I think so too."

The young girl lovingly wound her arms around his neck, and laid her fair head on his shoulder, while she gazed into her father's face.

"Thank you for letting me go to Gosport to see Nabbaye. The sea is not as rough as it looks, and I will certainly return before night. These

September days are so beautiful, and in winter for weeks together you know we can not leave our island. I must make a purchase, father. Susan Daws sent me word that she had some good woolen cloth for dress goods. I would like to buy a few yards from her, enough for a dress pattern."

"That means an attack on the captain's pocket! Aye, Theo?"

Without waiting for her to reply, he laid in his daughter's hands a gold piece, which he took from his leather pouch.

"Yes, father, I will need some of the wherewithal, but," glancing at the coin, "what have you given me? You are naughty to cheat your little Theo. See, father, it is an old foreign coin."

Captain Burton's face fell. "Nonsense, child, let me take a look at it. I have made a mistake. Here's another gold piece with which yer can buy all the ribbons and folderols yer so hanker after."

"Now father that's what I call unfair; you know I never spend much on dress; only for books, they are like real friends."

"I only wanted to tease yer, Theo. No one would ever say my girl was extravagant or vain. Only beware of the yarn spinners, and return before sunset."

"I think I'll take the poor old creature some of

my jelly. I made it only yesterday. Peter will not come for me until after dinner, so I will have plenty of time to put the house to rights. Father, I must dally no longer out here in the garden."

Suiting the action to the words, Theo ran lightly down the walk. The captain stood watching her slight sylph-like figure, shading his eyes with one hand until she disappeared in the porch. He hurriedly drew his rough coat sleeve across his eyes, for he was thinking of his Cicily, when she came as a bride to her island-home.

Captain Burton had married late in life, and Cicily Parker, a New Hampshire woman, had been the object of his choice. She was an orphan, her parents having died while she was quite young. Brought up by an aged uncle, she met by chance one day, the retired seaman, Captain Anthony Burton. He had come from his island, to buy some fishing tackle of her uncle. Cicily was then in her nineteenth year, and very beautiful. It proved to be the story of love at first sight. The young girl remained with her uncle until his death, and then there being no other tie to bind her to the mainland, she accepted the love and devotion of the old bachelor, promising to be to him a faithful wife, and this promise was lovingly kept.

As the years rolled on, the husband, once rough, became greatly softened by the loving example of his dear one.

The young wife never knew what it was to see many strange faces, but she was very happy in her husband's love. When the little baby girl came to brighten the lives of both, the father said she should be named Theodosia. He liked it. Cicily never asked the why or wherefore, but sweetly acquiesced, and thus the child bore the quaint old-fashioned christian name which was shortened to Theo.

The little one had a very sunny nature, and was from her very earliest years a great comfort to her mother, from the time when she lay cradled in her arms. No schoolmaster had influenced the life of little Theo, only the mother's watchful eye and loving heart had guided the child's education. Her smile of approval had helped the young student to persevere on the road of knowledge. Cicily Burton, having in her youth received a good education, was amply fitted to transmit it to her daughter.

Nature had also been a good schoolmistress to Theo. She had talked to her through the waves, through the sunshine and the storm. Theo's was a romantic soul, and the young girl learnt to live in two distinct worlds. As a child, after her tasks were finished, she would sit on the shelly shore and play with the blue and purple mussel shells, and striped cockles, which she would imagine little boats deserted by the sea fairies, and would send

them sailing away on the waves. She loved also to look for bits of transparent quartz, white or rosy, or pieces of dull purple porphyry, all wet and clear, as they were washed to her feet by the incoming foam. The child built tiny houses of these, and the wet gravel, inviting a few of the gray army of sand-hoppers, to come and live in them. These she would chase from their home under some bit of seaweed at the high water line, and gleefully clap her hands, as they hopped away in disgust, looking like tiny kangaroos. Or she would, while sitting on the rocks, cut out of the slippery varnished kelps, ridiculous figures of little old men, or queer shaped birds and animals, which the wind would wither up, and then carry away. The child would search for sea anemones, which hid themselves among the rocks, opening their lovely flowers to the waters; or hanging in clusters like amber-colored fruit against the ledges as the waves receded. Then the tiny pools, forgotten by the ocean, left in the hollow of some rock, reflecting the blue of the heavens, spoke to Theo of God's love. All through the long summer days, she talked with the blackberry blossoms, or the crowfoot, or the blue-purple beach pea, or the pimpernel and wild roses. As the child grew older, there were days when the dreams grew more real. After storms she would find washed up on the rocks, the bodies of drowned butterflies and

pretty birds with bits of driftwood, a broken oar, pieces of spar, or a water worn buoy. One day the body of a man was found, the face swollen and livid, the eyes sunken. Then Theo realized what life meant, it was all she knew of death. After this, the waves spoke to her as they had never before done in her childhood. When they moaned, it was as if some human soul suffered; when they sang it was of the sunshine, and of the God who made them. Then came the crushing blow when she found herself motherless. Her father she knew loved her deeply, but Captain Burton was a stern, morose man, and the sympathy the young girl needed came to her through her God and the fair world He had made.

From her earliest years, the mother had taught her daughter to love and study the Bible. It had always been her own guide and counsellor, and she fully obeyed its holy precepts. There had existed but little sympathy in matters pertaining to religious things, between the captain and his wife; thus the mother and daughter were drawn even more closely together. Theo's soul was as pure and white as the wing of a sea bird, or the foam on the crest of the wave as it dashed upon the rocks.

Once a month the two would attend divine service in the little church at Gosport, the wind and the seas permitting.

The fisher folk in the village were almost all strangers to Captain Burton, his wife and daughter. They shrank from the man's stern unbending nature. He was known as the "Silent man of Duck" or "The man with a black hand." Visitors from the mainland, when questioning the inhabitants of Star about the little gray cottage and its occupants, as to how they lived, where they came from, etc.? would be answered by a shake of the head, and a shrug of the shoulders. Captain Burton had built his cottage many years before he met the beautiful Cicily, while he was still quite a young man. Never had he talked about himself with the inhabitants of the Shoals. If he was asked why he chose Duck Island for his home, he would answer, that he had always been fond of the sea, and loved it too well to go away from it. How he lived no one knew; he seemed to have enough money, but was very close in his affairs. At last even the gossips grew tired of questioning, and the sole inhabitant of Duck Island, his wife and child were looked upon no longer as objects of curiosity or suspicion. Strange stories from time to time floated around, but the sea breezes carried them far away, and the man of Duck, now a widower, dwelt alone with his daughter in their island home.

CHAPTER III.

“Cliffs of emerald topped with snow,
That lift and lift, and then let go,
A great white avalanche of thunder.”

THE dinner things were washed and laid carefully away. Theo stood on the beach near the little landing place, her father by her side, awaiting the arrival of old Peter and the dory.

Soon a tiny black speck was seen dancing on the waves. Nearer and nearer it came, until the little blue boat and its sole occupant, were close to them. As the fisherman rested on his oars his querulous voice was heard.

“Good day to yer, captain, and to yer, Miss Theo. I come as I promised, yer see. Nabbaye and Bennaye said they don’ know whe’r or no it’s best or no for me to venture. But my boat, she’s as pretty a piece of wood as ever floated. Strikes a sea and comes down like a pillow. So aknowin’ this, I says, I reckon there ain’t much danger, so I just got up and got.”

Old Peter appeared like a very ancient fossil. Only a few white hairs graced his yellow pate; his eyes, deep set and of a washed out blue, had a

curious inquisitive way of looking out into the world. His lower jaw quite toothless, hung dejectedly down, his upper lip caving in, showing likewise an absence of the masticating members.

A patched red flannel shirt, loose trousers and a broad-brimmed straw hat formed the old fisherman's outfit.

"Wait a bit, Miss Theo, until I fetch yer into the skiff."

With these words, old Peter pulled up close to the little landing place. Theo jumped in, helped by her father, and the dory pushed off.

"Good-bye, father, good-bye."

Captain Burton waved his hat until they were hidden from view.

Theo had many questions to ask Peter, as to the condition of old Bennaye and Nabbaye, all of which he answered in monosyllables, then sunk into a deep reverie, from which she could not rouse him. The spray dashed into the faces of both, as the fisherman's slow, even stroke brought them nearer to land. Theo's cheeks grew rosy, and her eyes danced with delight. Soon they neared the little harbor of Gosport, and the young girl found herself before she knew it, on terra firma, standing before the tumble down cottage of old Bennaye.

The poor man himself opened the door, giving her a warm welcome. Nabbaye, the wife was

bed-ridden most of the time. She was a peculiar looking old creature, with a stubby growth of gray hair on her chin, a flabby face, the few remaining locks tucked up under a closely fitting nightcap, which was bordered around by a deep ruffle. From under this, a pair of black eyes looked up into Theo's. A pipe protruded from her mouth.

"Yer a christian to come to see old Nabbaye. Thank yer! Heaven bless yer! Bennaye can't yer fetch a settin' support for the visitor? Yer ain't got no manners, yer old creeper!"

"Slat my head off, Nabbaye, if I ain't a fetchin' one. I looked in the cupboard and under the bed, and couldn't find any settin' support, until I got this." Holding in front of him a rickety chair, with a cane seat, which had quite a large hole in the middle of it.

"Here, Miss Theo! Sorry to keep yer waitin'. I ain't as cricketty as I once was."

"See," said Theo, seating herself on the apology for a chair which Bennaye brought her. "I have here in this basket some fresh eggs and a form of jelly, which I hope you will enjoy, Nabbaye."

"Heens' aigs? well that is veraye good. I'm as dry as a graven image, and have been prayin' the Lord fer heens' aigs or a swallick of whiskey or hennything He feels like sendin'. Lor', 'twan't ne'er ordained that my ole man and me would live

to be burdens to folks. I says to Bennaye last night ‘hake fishin’s’ overdone. Poor Peter he fetches us all he can, but he done know nothin’ ‘bout it. What’s he know? He’s so old he just sits in the sun, and chaws and chaws, and when he ain’t chawin’, his fishin’, or makin’ believe fish. I guess the fish knows his putty old, and can’t see good out of those faded calico eyes of his.”

“Wal, Nabbaye, ye shut up! will yer? Chin-nin’ away like any old grans. Squint says, yer’s worse than the gulls. I ain’t had any show yet.”

“Yer poor white faced chowder-head, yer too stupid to open yer mouth.”

When Theo could get a word in edgewise, she found out from the old people about their ailments, and as to what they needed. But Nabbaye, never long silent, began again.

“There’s Brag and his wife, they’ve a new boarder. Some says he pays well. Some says he paints picters. Lor’! you’d laugh. ’Twas yesterday a week ago, when Mr. Allston, that’s the boarder’s name, he come to our cottage and says he:

“‘What a picturesque abode yer have! Was it built many years ago?’ ‘I dun know about picturesque,’ says I. ‘Lor’, ‘twan’t never built, ‘twas only hove together.’ Yer should ha’ seen him laugh. Wal, he sot down and ‘twan’t long afore be was a paintin’ me.” Nabbaye laughed heartily. “I guess he thought I wa’ putty!”

Here Bennaye interrupted his wife. "Billaye Rollins' wife's mother's aunt's a dyin' of consumption. Lor'! she's a sight, eyes shove in, and down around the mouth; her cheeks as red as apples. Ain't yer goin' to take her nothin' t' eat? Yer's always so good to me and Nabbaye, that we feels selfish like."

"I fear I will have but little time to see the invalid, as I promised my father to return before sunset. However, the next time I come, I will try and bring her some things to tempt her appetite. I think Nabbaye, as I have errands to attend to, I must hurry away now. The days are growing very much shorter you know."

With these words, Theo rose, and after tidying up the room a bit, and doing a few things which would add to the comfort of the old people,—she took her leave. After making her one purchase, and looking in upon the poor consumptive, she retraced her steps to the wharf where Peter and his blue boat awaited her. There were a few fishermen lounging around and smoking, talking over bits of village gossip.

"Lor'!" said one, a big squarely-built fellow who stood by the side of a young man, evidently by his dress and general bearing he was a gentleman. "Here comes the daughter of the black-handed captain. Yer see we calls him that, cause he wears a black glove on his right hand, no one

never seen him outer it. His real name's Burton."

The eyes of the young man fell upon the graceful figure of Theo, who was just stepping into old Peter's boat.

"She is a very good-looking young girl," the stranger replied. "Where does she come from?"

"She lives over there on Duck," pointing with his thumb to the island in question. "They be peculiar folks, her and her father. Never speaks to many, and keeps to themselves. The mother's dead. That's the daughter, Miss Theo, we calls her. Her father is a strange man, never smiles if he knows it. The gal has a kind heart, they tells me. She ain't like the father, havin' more the mother's stock in her makeup. She was from New Hampshire."

"Do you think," continued the stranger, as he was about turning away, "that this Captain Burton would take me in as a boarder for a few weeks? I want to do some painting, and they tell me the spray dashing over Shag and Mingo rocks is worth seeing, and that the long black ledges are very picturesque, whitened, as they so often are, by the snowy plumage of the gulls."

"That yer must find out for yerself. I don' know whe'r or no it's best or no. Yer must judge. The captain's mighty queer, and strange yarns float about. Holy Smoke! I guess he's harmless. Yer can try. Askin's never done any hurt."

The old fisherman turned slowly away, and began to examine his nets. The inhabitants of the Shoals were among the first to receive New England christianity and civilization, but after a time were given up to a state of semi-barbarism. In the year 1614, the islands were discovered by John Smith. Others soon followed, and the larger of the islands grew in population.

In 1650, the Rev. John Brock, a lonely christian man, went to live among the people, and his example and noble life bore fruit. In 1661, the general court incorporated the islands into a town and called it Appledore. In the same year there were about forty families living on Hog Island, but these removed afterward to Star. For more than a hundred years before the Revolution, there were from three to six hundred inhabitants, and three to four thousand quintals of fish were yearly caught and sold in Spain and the West Indies. The church was in a prosperous condition, and the people ready to hear the gospel. The settlement remained in this state until the Revolutionary war, when, on account of the dangers which threatened the islanders, they were ordered to leave and make their homes on the mainland. A few however remained, and they became degraded and lawless. The meeting house was burned, and drunkenness and debauchery alone reigned.

Here in the earliest times Captain Kidd was thought to have buried some of his treasures, and other pirates found it a convenient place to hide some of their ill-gotten gains. From time to time many faithful christian men and women labored among the "Shoalers," and tried to raise them from their forlorn condition. At the opening of our story, there were comparatively few people living in the little fishing village of Gosport. Their lives were full of hardships and poverty. The women grew old before their time.

"For men must work and women must weep,
And there's little to earn and many to keep;
Tho' the harbor bar be moaning."

Theo reached home safely in Peter's snug dory. She found her father anxiously awaiting her.

At supper time they talked over all that had been said and done, of all that Theo had heard while at Gosport, and it was late when the daughter sought her chamber.

The night was chilly and dark. Nothing disturbed the stillness, but the noise of the waves beating on the rocks, or the shrill scream of the loons. The captain remained sitting by the table just as Theo had left him. Suddenly he started from his chair. A sound quite different from the cry of the loons, attracted his attention. He listened. It was a low whistle, and seemed to

come from behind the window nearest him. He stepped forward, and raised the sash. A rough looking man stood before him.

"Anthony, old boy, let me in. I've been a long time waitin' for that girl of yours to get out of the way. She's good-lookin'. You never let me see her, so I made up for lost time!"

"I didn't expect yer until to-morrow evenin', Schuyler."

"Why in thunder do you have such a poor memory. 'Tis the very day of the month, Anthony, that yer had a right to expect me. I've stowed my boat away. It's no daylight business I'm on, when I come to see you!—Aye, Anthony? There, give me your hand and I'll jump the window sill. I'm not a rightful skipper, but I can do this." Suiting the action to the words, the rough visitor sprang into the room.

"Yer can be any kind of a tool, Jack, when you like the business."

The man addressed was a hard looking specimen of humanity. He was evidently about sixty years of age. A crop of yellowish gray hair hung from under his shabby cap. This he removed, revealing a pair of bold, bad eyes, which furtively glanced about the little room.

"You're a nice comrade to give me such a warm welcome. One would think you'd like to see an old friend." With these words he clapped the

captain on the back and burst out into a coarse laugh.

"Hush, man, your voice will waken my Theo. I would not have her know that any one was here."

"Ashamed of your friend, Anthony? Yer'll have to give me a bigger share of hush money, if yer want me to keep your secret. I am as good as yer any day." He fixed his evil eye on Captain Burton's face, and a sly, diabolical smile passed over his features.

"Yer forget, Schuyler, that I also am keepin' your secret. Man, we each have forged our chains, we must carry them until the end. Don't I give yer large enough pay?"

"Aye, Anthony, hush money is a good thing, but now I want something more in payment for what I've done. I want yer daughter. Give her to me, and I'll be satisfied."

Burton raised his arm as if to strike, his eyes flashed fire. "Say those words again, Jack Schuyler, and it will be worse for yer. Don't pollute my Theo's name with your dirty tongue! My little Theo! Great God, I would rather see her in her coffin, than share such a fate. Never speak her name again, or by the evil one himself, I'll——"

"Harkee, comrade, I've been workin' fer too small pay, changin' your dirty foreign gold and

keepin' your secrets. I swear I'll do it no longer."

Burton trembled. He made a great effort to control himself. His hands remained clenched, and his mouth had a set look.

Schuyler continued, "Yer know, old boy, you're in my power. Speak, which will it be? your gold or your daughter? It's not in my line to waste words, and I've come to-night to put things through."

Captain Burton roused himself. "Yer always did enjoy a joke, Jack, and yer jokin' now. My Theo is as far above yer as the white sea gull is above the porpoise. Nay, yer shall never touch my girl."

"Ha! but your secret, and yer gold!"

"We have always been good comrades. Here take this extra pouch for yourself. I was goin' to ask you to change it. Keep it, Jack, I've enough left over from what you last changed for me."

"I'll use some of it for number one, but, Anthony, this once and this once only, will I take the gold and change it for yer. They begin to look at me suspiciously, and ask where so many foreign pieces come from. I will have my pay. Give me your daughter and a round sum, or else give me half of yer ill-gotten gains. Or when I return in two weeks' time, and if you've not made up your mind, it'll be worse for yer! I'll be revenged, I

swear by heaven, I will ! Beware ! beware of bringin' the daylight to shine on the dark past. Think of the disgrace ! Yer child need never know about it. I'll marry her, and go away to foreign parts. She'll believe in her father's honor," he continued with a sneer.

"Yer forget ! Yer have a wife." Great beads of sweat stood on Burton's forehead. "I have the proof."

"That is already managed, she is no longer my wife, the law gives me the right to put her away."

"Her money ! What have yer done with that, wretch ?"

"Ha ! ha ! ha ! that's safe, where you'll never find it. I'll tell a hard story, should yer force her back on me. I'll tell the world she belongs to yer. I'll go now, as I said, but I'll return, and have my answer ! "

With these words Jack Schuyler raised the sash, and sprang out into the darkness.

Burton stood as he had left him, with clenched hands and knotted brows. He listened for the splash of the oars and the swash of the waters, as the boat was rowed away. Then he drew to the shutters, wound up the clock, and taking the lamp in his hand, passed upstairs to his room. As he

went he muttered, "Wretch! What's my secret worth, my own life even, if harm should fall on Theo's head? Cicily, she's yer child and *yer* first taught me the right!"

CHAPTER IV.

"Beneath the loveliest dream there coils a fear."

THE next morning, Theo and her father met in the cosy little kitchen at the breakfast table. A bright fire was burning in the stove, and the tea-kettle was boiling and singing its song of content, while the family pet, Gray, softly purring, lay half asleep on the rug.

"Theo, didn't yer rest well last night? Yer look pale this mornin'?"

"The wind beat against the house, and rattled the windows so that I thought I would never close my eyes. Then once, it was just before I succeeded in dropping off, I thought I heard a coarse laugh. 'Ha! ha! ha!' it went. However, of course, it was the wind."

"What an imagination yer have, child. I'll make the sashes a bit tauter, so that they'll not rattle. The wind did blow a gale last night. I thought myself that I heard whistlin'?"

"But, father, even when I slept, I had such horrible dreams. I fancied I was in our dory all alone by myself. Suddenly there rose out of the water the figure of a beautiful woman. She had

a Bible in her clasped hands, and looked into my face so pleadingly. ‘Save me,’ she said, ‘save me, I pray you.’ Before I could stretch out my hand, she sank under the waves. There was such a tone of anguish in her voice, father; even now I can hear her imploring me to save her. I awoke in terror. Before me stood a woman, with a strange look on her face. She was bending over me. ‘*He will come, he will come again,*’ she said. I put out my hand to push her from me, but there was no one there. It must have been a dream as well, and yet I seemed to be wide awake.”

During his daughter’s recital, Captain Burton remained very quiet, shading his eyes with one hand so that she could not see his face. At last he spoke. “ You have had strange dreams, Theo. Was anythin’ said to yer yesterday about Captain Scott’s lovely lady? Her ghost is said to haunt these islands.”

“ No, father, what is the story? Can you tell it to me?”

“ Years ago Captain Teach, called Blackbeard, and his comrade, Captain Scott, came to the Shoals, on one of which he, Captain Scott, buried his treasures, leavin’ his fair lady to guard it durin’ his absence. He and his pirate friends went off on a plunderin’ expedition, and came to a violent death, bein’ all blown up in a powder magazine. The poor creature in time died, and her ghost is

said to haunt the islands, sayin', ‘He will come: he will come again!’ She wears a seaman’s cloak, and her long, golden hair falls over her shoulders; her eyes have a melancholy expression. It was this strange lady yer were dreamin’ of, she perhaps appeared to yer in yer sleep.”

“No, father, the one I saw was not like the person you describe. Her eyes, father, haunt me yet, those of the woman by my bed. There were other words she said, ‘You are in danger! beware!’”

“Dreams are indeed strange things, Theo. I never set much store by them.”

“Life is too real and earnest, father, I must be up and doing—so to work I go!”

“Well, Theo, to come down to the practical side of life. I want yer durin’ the day sometime, to mend the large fishnet. It got damaged last week. To day I will try my luck over near ‘Bone.’ Mackerel, herring and blue fish, as well as perch, are now pretty plentiful. We must lay in a supply for ‘flakin’.’ Yer can put me up some victuals, for I shan’t return afore night. I don’t like to leave yer, Theo. If old Peter, or any stray visitor comes over from Star, yer can be hospitable to them. It’s a fine day and this weather ain’t goin’ to last much longer.”

After her father’s departure, Theo, as busy as a bee, went about her work. Hers was such a sunny nature. There was the bread to be baked,

and her new gown must be cut and basted. The kitchen clock had just struck three, when suddenly she started to her feet, as she heard a knock at the door. Advancing timidly, she slowly opened it. There stood before her a handsome man of about thirty.

"I presume this is Captain Burton's house," he said, politely, removing his hat. "And you, are you Miss Burton, the captain's daughter?"

"Yes," answered Theo. "What is there that I can do for you? My father has gone out fishing, but he will be back before dark."

"I regret your father's absence, Miss Burton, as I have a great favor to ask of him. It may be best for me to return to-morrow and acquaint him with it. My name is Allston. I am a lawyer, but as my health has become shattered by being too closely confined, I determined to spend a few weeks on these islands, where I hope to regain my strength. Your wonderful sea air has already done much for me, and the rest and quiet are just what I need. I have been staying at Star for three weeks, and thought I would like to visit Duck, as it is even further away from civilization. Do you think your father would take me in only for a month?" Seeing the young girl's look of hesitation, he added, "I will promise to give you no trouble, Miss Burton."

"We have never had any one with us since my mother died. If you care to wait until father returns, I will find out his wishes."

"Thank you, Miss Burton. I will amuse myself out on the rocks by doing some sketching, until the captain returns. I am not an artist, but I love to daub a little now and then, when the fancy seizes me. Pray do not let me longer detain you."

Theo modestly blushed, and retired to the kitchen, where she resumed her sewing. She was so busy planning her new gown, that she quite forgot about the stranger. Suddenly she looked up from her work, the shadows were deepening and the day drawing to a close. Hastily laying aside her gown, she rose, and was about to pick up some of the threads that had fallen on the floor, when the door was pushed open, and her father stood before her, the young stranger just behind him.

"Well, Theo, busy as ever? Mr. Allston's told me of his wish to remain for a few weeks on our little island. If we can make him comfortable, my daughter he is welcome." Then turning to Mr. Allston he said, "The guest chamber over the parlor ain't large, but it's neat and sunny. I think yer can be happy there. Theo, will yer see about its bein' put in order?"

"Yes, father," and she hurried away, to do as she was bidden. The room being made ready,

Mr. Allston took possession of his new quarters. The father and daughter were alone in the kitchen.

"Our guest seems to be a sensible fellow. I hope, Theo, yer will do all yer can for his comfort."

"He is a stranger to us father, and I can not see why you take such an interest in him."

"My child, years ago in my early life I knew some one bearin' the same name. I've always felt that it would give me some satisfaction to do what lay in my power for any person, either a connection or only one having the name. Then, too, we have had no strangers with us since yer mother died. Her last words to me were 'Anthony, our Theo must see a bit of the world. Do not keep her too much alone.'"

"I have never missed the society of the world, dear father. While I have you, I want none else, only mother." A tear rolled down Theo's cheek. "It seems to me I long more and more as the days pass on for a loving touch of her hand, or one of her sweet smiles. She will not come back to us, but we will go to her."

"Aye! child, if we're good enough. My soul ain't as white as yours. There'll be time enough, however, when the last comes; I ain't goin' to cross the bridge till I get to it."

"No, father," and Theo's face grew so earnest, "now is the accepted time, and Christ calls you.

It is dangerous to wait. We can never know what one day may bring to any of us."

"Well, Theo, I'll think it over. Hark! I hear footsteps on the stairs. Our guest is comin' down from his perch."

Just at that moment Mr. Allston entered the room.

"You have given me a charming chamber, Captain Burton. I felt as I looked from my window, that I was far out at sea on board of some vessel; only the motion was lacking. You have fine views of the great limitless expanse of waters."

"Yes, I never tire myself of our island. But," rising from his chair, "I forgot about my fishin' gear, I must go out and see after it. Will yer give me a hand at it? Theo, we will leave yer mistress of the kitchen. So make the best of yer time. I'm that hungry, shoe-leather would go down. Mr. Allston, after breathin' in so much salt air, will also need plenty of victuals." The two men left the room.

Supper was soon made ready by Theo's skilful hands. Both men declared they had dined like kings. The evening passed most pleasantly, Mr. Allston grew to feel quite at home as they sat in the neat little sitting-room, before a cheerful fire, telling stories and talking over the events of the year.

After a while the conversation turned upon character. Mr. Allston remarking, "I can always read a man's character, by glancing in his eyes; the eyes give away many secrets."

"Yes," continued the captain, "but all the same yer make mistakes. Tell me what my character is like?"

"Yours, captain,—let me see." He fixed his eyes on Burton's gray eyes. "You have had a history, I should judge. Some trouble. This came to you when you were young. What it is, I do not know, of course. I am afraid I judge from your right hand on which you seem to wear a black glove. Are you aware, the people on Star call you the black handed man of Duck? Why do you wear the glove, captain?"

The captain's color changed. "I have a strange fancy for the glove. It's only a fancy. The people on Star are nothin' but yarn-spinners. They've made up out of whole cloth, more stories than the one about me and my family. I care little for the things they say. They roll off my back as easily as water off a duck's. A queer world we live in, Mr. Allston! A queer world!"

"Yes, captain, but very often we who live in it, make it queer. God gave it to us beautiful and pure; we make the world what it is. Each life knows its own bitterness, each back carries its burdens."

"Yes, Mr. Allston," interrupted Theo's clear voice. "But there is the Burden Bearer you know."

"Do you believe in priestly confession, Mr. Allston?"

"I've always felt there must be many folks in the world who long to talk over their troubles with some one."

"No doubt there are a great many, but you know we have a great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of infirmities, who knows our failings, our struggles."

"Yes, but somehow He seems far away from poor mortals."

"Father, excuse me Mr. Allston, if we draw nigh unto Him, He will draw nigh unto us. Mother said so, and the Bible says the same."

"Theo, you oughter be a female preacher, there's lots of 'em now among the Quakers."

The young girl's face fell. "I am not worthy of such an honor, dear father."

"Well, it seems to me we've been havin' a regular Methodist meetin'. I say we all go to bed."

"Such talks," continued Allston, "never hurt anyone. We live on earth I know, but the other world's nearer than some of us dream. Good night, captain. Good night, Miss Burton. Pleasant dreams to you both!" With these words, he rose and left the room. Theo followed,

and the captain alone with his thoughts, sat before the fire far into the night. The words of the stranger sounded in his ears. "The other world's nearer than some of us dream!"

CHAPTER V.

'The month of carnival of all the year,
When nature lets the wild earth go its way—
And spend whole seasons on a single day."

DAYS passed, October came. The golden-rod, asters, the bayberry and everlasting still lingered. The weather was mild and beautiful.

Just as the sun was setting, Theo Burton, the young stranger, Mr. Allston by her side, stood before the cottage door. Neither spoke, both seemed lost in admiration at the wonderful beauty of the scene. The cry of the plover and the curlew could be heard, and away off in the distance, a school of porpoises were discernible as they turned over and over in the water. Fleecy clouds piled in many fantastic ways, some ablaze with gold and crimson, covered the heavens; while above the horizon, a long line of carmine stretched itself. Another figure joined the group—it was Captain Burton.

"We're goin' to have a good gale before mornin'. When yer see the sky look like that, it means business. Theo, yer'd better see if the shutters work well. I've been doin' some jobbin'

this noon. We must get ready for nasty weather. Yer won't sleep much to-night, Mr. Allston. Our island is quite safe, but when there's a storm, we generally get the worst of it."

As the captain spoke, he raised to his eyes a glass, which he had brought from the house.

"Aye, there's a boat makin' for Duck, as sure as I'm standin' here. No, she will turn toward Star, I guess." A close observer would have seen the captain's face flush, then grow paler.

Wheeling suddenly around, he absently made his way toward the cottage, muttering to himself. "'Tis just two weeks, and the villain, true to his word, has come for an answer. Theo," he called, "I'll take my supper alone to-night. Fetch me some bread, cheese and a little spiced fish."

"Why, it's very early, father."

"Aye! aye! but I've work to do that will keep me busy, some carpentering in the shed, and then the wood needs splitting. It'll take me most all the evenin', and I don't want to be disturbed. Mind, you and Mr. Allston must not talk too much. After your supper yer might light the lamp, and go into the sittin'-room."

Theo looked surprised, but as she had been brought up never to question her father as to his doings, she simply remarked, "Very well, I will fill the lantern for you, as the woodhouse is but a gloomy place."

After the captain had finished his frugal meal, he betook himself to the woodhouse, and carefully locked the door on the inner side, the one leading into the kitchen, and arranged his logs for splitting. Still he did not begin work. The sun had long since set. As the captain had predicted, a gale had sprung up, which was gaining momentarily in violence. The windows of the cottage, notwithstanding the work he had done, rattled loudly. The cry of the loons could be heard. He looked out of the little window, over the black expanse of water. Yes, the tiny speck was coming nearer. Opening the door leading into the garden, he closed it carefully behind him. Theo and young Allston were eating supper. By going around back of the house he would not be seen in the dim light. He approached the landing place, against which the waves were furiously dashing, and stood waiting. The tiny speck proved to be a boat containing a single man. It came nearer and nearer, and at last touched the wharf. The occupant sprang on the landing, holding the rope in his hand. On observing Captain Burton, he started uneasily, then suddenly recovering himself said, "Hello, Anthony! So yer thought you'd come and meet yer old friend, did yer? It's pleasant to have someone waitin' for yer." Fastening the rope to one of the piles he made his way by the captain's side to a group

of rocks, behind which they could stand and talk, being concealed from the cottage, even were it possible in the semi-blackness to distinguish anything. They were shielded as well from the wind.

"'Tis a bad night, Anthony. You'll know it, if I go off this island before mornin'. You'll have to put up with me. I've come for my answer, old boy. Are you ready with it? Your daughter ain't bad lookin'. She'll take all the polish from me!" Opening his huge jaws he laughed, showing two rows of long yellow teeth.

"Hush, Joe, don't speak so of my little girl. I told yer last time and I tell yer again, she ain't for such as yer."

"For such as me? Ha! ha! ha! Anthony, then for the gold! One or the other, yer know. I've come to collect my dues, so yer might as well be pleasant about it."

"When my daughter marries, 'twill be to one who's worthy of her, not one like you or me."

"None of yer sermons, Anthony—we're only wastin' words. Ducats or daughter?" Schuyler's hand rested on the pistol which he wore in his belt, his face worked convulsively. "Show me where your treasure's hid. I've kept your secret a long time, but I'll be hanged if I keep it much longer."

Burton stood facing his antagonist,

"Yer don't care to have me take care of yer
— — ?"

"Stop, that's in the agreement. No backing out, or it'll be worse for yer. There's no escape for yer. Half, or yer daughter!" Alone, and struggling inwardly, he turned fiercely upon Schuyler. "Follow me!" he said, and led the way to the woodhouse. Both entered. Captain Burton laid his finger on his lips to enforce silence.

He then took the ax in his hand, and began to hack at a great thick log. "She thinks I'm workin'—splittin' wood for the winter. I told her, yer know. I guess that's enough noise for the present." He took the lantern Theo had given him, placing a smaller folding one in the hands of his companion.

Removing the boards and the circular bit of wood which covered the opening, he bade Schuyler follow. Down the stone steps went both men. As they reached the cave, the roving eyes of the villain lighted on the chests and bags; they danced with expectation.

"Be generous, Anthony, I'm yer true friend, yer know."

The captain began to untie with trembling fingers the cord which bound the neck of one of the bags.

"Give all in that to me, partner. Remember the bargain!"

"I'll give yer half, and no more," moodily answered the captain; "half of the contents of that bag, which contains only gold, and half of the contents of the other which contains silver. The third I'll see about." Schuyler held his lantern close to the mouth of the sacque.

"You're rich Anthony, rich as—"

"Hold your tongue, Schuyler, this is not a time for words. Yer a—"

"Take care man, the secret. About that chest over yonder, what am I to have of its contents? There are two of them, I see."

"Yer to have half of the bars of silver and a few of the jewels. The silver, some of it came from"—Captain Burton looked suspiciously about him. "What is that over there? I thought I saw somethin'."

"No ears or eyes here, Anthony; only devils inhabit the lower regions. You and I do make a good pair."

"I know, Joe, I have done wrong in my life, but now I'm goin' to part company with yer forever. It's for Theo's sake." His eyes grew moist as he thought of his child. "She must never know about all this. I'll get the gold changed myself, and will no longer need yer."

"Ha! ha! ha! Yer don't get rid of me as easy as all that. If I'm to lose yer valuable friendship, I'll have more than half, by thunder, I will!"

He raised his arm as if to strike, and his black eyes blazed like coals of fire. "Ha! ha! ha! Yer think to pull the wool over my eyes! I'll tell yer, Joe Schuyler ain't the man to be fooled. Dam yer, man, and the whole business! It never paid me, 'taint my way of makin' money!"

"I've given yer more than your share, and yet yer ain't satisfied. What else de yer want?"

"Your girl!"

"My daughter? Mention her name again, and I'll not answer for the consequences! It was a bad day when I told yer the yarn about my early life."

"Too much whiskey plays the devil with a man, partner, and yer gave yourself away. Only be thankful there was no one else to overhear your secret. Many's the occasion I wanted to tell on yer, but I pulled myself up just in time. I've kept it these twenty years, but I ain't goin' ter much longer, if yer turn me off, and don't give me a bigger share of your fortune. You old miser! I believe yer've hidden away under some of these rocks, any number of chests and bags. Swear man, is this all you possess? or, by Heaven, I'll be even with yer!"

Captain Burton looked Joe Schuyler in the eyes and swore. "I've never broken my word to yer, and yet yer doubt me now," he huskily continued.

"That's more than I know, comrade. I can't see inside of yer." An evil light shone in the black eyes.

Captain Burton staggered back against the wall of the cave, gasping for breath, then fell heavily on the floor. His face was pale and pinched, the eyes dull and dilated, the skin cold, while he shivered as if in an attack of ague.

Joe Schuyler glanced carefully at the prostrate form.

"Do yer feel ill, Anthony? Here," taking a small black bottle from his pocket and holding it to the lips of the man he hated. "Drink this, it will make yer feel better." The nervous strain had been too great, Captain Burton seemed to be suffering from a condition of shock, prostration, or utter collapse. He made no resistance, as Schuyler poured the mixture down his throat, but lay in a semi-conscious condition.

"There, that will keep the old man quiet for a time, at least! Now to work."

Walking over to the larger chest, which had as yet been unopened, he forced the lock, taking the greater part of the bars of silver, besides trinkets and some plate. These he placed carefully in a square sacque, which he had carried folded up under his pea-jacket. This he filled with the gold and silver coins from the remaining bags. How dimly the lantern burned, he could hear the

howling of the wind, the storm was gaining in violence.

"I have five hours yet before me to spend in this dark hole," he said to himself; "the drug will keep Anthony quiet for some time yet. I'd rather be here than out in the storm on such a night. How quiet the house seems. The girl must have gone to bed." He sat down on the floor beside his bag, took from his pocket a large old-fashioned timepiece, called a turnip, and looked at it.

"Ha! 'tis just nine. So long as that old bag of bones sleeps, and it ain't likely he'll wake up yet awhile, I can enjoy myself. Let me think." He buried his head in his hands. "At twelve, I'll make for the girl. I'll chloroform the pretty bird. The stuff seems to work well on her father. Wonder she doesn't miss Anthony." Drawing another bottle from his hip pocket, marked "whiskey," he took a good pull at it and laid himself down on the stone floor, not far away from his victim. His eyes partially closed, red and bleared, glared fixedly upon the booty. He had left nothing of much value in the chests, both bags being small he had emptied into his. There remained yet one, a quarter full. He would try and sleep. Now and then a rat ran across his legs. The close air of the cave seemed at times unbearable,

"The gold," he muttered, "the gold—it's mine! And I'll have the girl as well! Ha! ha! ha!" "Ha!" ha! ha!" echoed the walls.

Theo Burton and young Allston had gone after supper, into the little sitting-room. Theo busied herself with her knitting. She was making her father a pair of warm stockings. Allston sat not far away by the round table; a book lay before him, but he was not reading. The white Angora cat lay curled up at her young mistress's feet—apparently enjoying the warmth from the cheerful fire. The firelight fell on Theo's pretty hair, making it appear like gold, and on the steel needles as they rapidly moved back and forth.

Her blue eyes had a far away look in them; she seemed quite oblivious of all about her, not noticing that Mr. Allston's handsome face was turned toward her.

"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Theo," he said at length. "I've been wondering how long we would both sit here, and say nothing."

"A penny for my thoughts, did you say, Mr. Allston? Well, I will tell you of what I was thinking. I was thinking," here she stopped, and fixed her eyes on the young man's face. "I was thinking of dear father, and wondering why he has always seemed so sad. Why he never jokes and laughs as other people do. It is so nice to have you here, Mr. Allston, to have some company

when father is busy. It is such a dreary night, and if you were not here I should be quite alone. I hate the thought of the coming winter, for I love the summer so dearly, and my flowers. You see I've never seen many persons, and you talk just like a book, you know so much about the outside world, about people and things. Your ideas are so clever."

"I am glad you find me such an interesting study, Miss Theo," and the young man laughed heartily. "No one ever cared to listen to my stupid talk, no one, but my sister. She died some years ago. I wish she had lived, for had she done so, I should have been a better man in every way. A sister is a great help to a fellow."

"Now tell me, Mr. Allston, of what you were thinking?"

"I was thinking of this same sister. Somehow, you made me think of her."

"I? How nice."

"Once upon a time, (by the way it was only a year ago, it seems longer) I became engaged to a young southern girl, but," he hesitated, "she came north to study art, and—well—I suppose she grew tired of my stupid letters—or, I should say of my stupid self, and we quarreled, then parted."

"I've read in books about love and such things. It must seem strange to care for any one more than for one's father or mother. Did she, the young southern girl, really care for you like that?"

"Yes, she—well she seemed to—we were both of us young," and with a sigh. "It's ancient history now."

"Did you love her just as I love my father, Mr. Allston?"

"Yes, but then it was not just the same as your love for your father. It was different. I can't explain, Miss Theo," the young man smiled.

"Don't laugh at me, please. What *is* love really? Story book love always seemed to me so false."

In blank surprise at the naïve question her companion turned awkwardly away.

"It is you, Miss Theo, who are an interesting study. Do you really want your question answered?"

"Yes, please."

"*Love*, why it's adoration, devotion, or—confound me!" aside "(I'm getting into deep waters) a,—a forgetting of self and giving all to the beloved one, sympathy, and,—I never had a girl ask me such a question before! Let's look it up in the dictionary. You have one, have you not? I thought I saw it in the bookcase."

"Yes, we have." Theo rose, crossed the room, opened the glass doors, and took out a large square volume. Placing it on the table, both bent over the pages, while Mr. Allston found what he wanted.

"Here, we have it, all in black and white, Miss Theo. I will read it to you. '*Love*, a feeling of strong attachment, induced by that which delights or commands admiration, especially, devoted attachment to, or tender or passionate affection for the opposite sex; to have the feeling of love; to be in love.' Hark! did you not hear a noise?"

"It is the wind rattling the shutters."

"No, Miss Theo, listen."

"Ah, I hear it, that is my father, he is sawing wood for our winter supply. He is in the wood-house, you know."

Satisfied by the explanation, young Allston leaned back in his chair. Theo had resumed her seat by the fire. The white cat, roused from her nap, had crossed over to the young man, taking refuge close to his feet. From time to time he would playfully touch pussy with the toe of his boot.

It was late, the lamp burned dimly. Suddenly there came a lull in the storm. The door slowly opened, and there stood before them a woman wrapt in a long cloak. She fixed her large eyes on them. Mr. Allston rose hurriedly, and was about to address the intruder, when in a low melancholy voice, she spoke—

"He will come—he will come again. Beware! Beware! He will come."

"Who?" replied Allston. The apparition had vanished.

"Hush," said Theo—"it is the lady, the ghost of pirate Scott's wife. She sometimes appears before some great trouble, they say. I have seen her but one other time. Theo's face was pale. Great drops of perspiration stood on Allston's forehead.

"'Tis strange, we were both of us wide awake." He passed his fingers through his brown curls. "That certainly was real. I never did believe in ghosts, but this is too much."

At that moment the house seemed to rock at its very foundations; the concussion of the breakers caused the cupboard shelves to shake, they heard the dishes fall crashing on the floor. The noise was deafening. Mad nature seemed to be lashing herself; all was chaos and confusion.

Allston stepped forward, and stood beside the young girl. "Are you afraid, Miss Theo? Is there danger of the timbers giving away, think you?"

"No, our cottage has weathered many a gale."

The doors were swinging on their hinges and squeaked and groaned as backward and forward they swayed.

"God have mercy on any boat that approaches our treacherous ledges to-night."

Just then a violent gust blew down the

chimney, sending clouds of smoke and sparks into the middle of the room. "Hark! did you hear that strange cry, Miss Theo? Someone is on the rocks!"

"Call my father. Quick! or it will be too late."

Allston ran out of the room, making his way to the woodhouse.

"Captain Burton! Captain Burton! There is someone on the rocks!"

The woodhouse was dark, there was something uncanny in the whole thing; he saw this at a glance.

Schuyler had, as we know, remained quietly in the cave, waiting for the time when he hoped to get possession of the beautiful girl he so coveted.

Becoming, as the hours dragged on, very tired of remaining on the hard cold floor, he stealthily crept out, carrying the bag on his shoulder. This he deposited outside of the woodhouse, under some bushes, and made his way through the kitchen across the little hallway. Here he crouched down in a dark corner and listened to the conversation that passed between the young people.

He had never dreamt that any guest was in the house, the captain had not told him. He realized that he had a more difficult game to play than he imagined. He too, had seen the ghost as

it passed out of the door into the night, and heard the wild screams, which he knew so well.

When young Allston ran out, calling “Captain Burton, Captain Burton!”—he made good use of his absence by rushing into the sitting-room and seizing the paralyzed Theo. Thrusting his handkerchief into her mouth, so that she could make no sound, he took her in his sinewy arms, opened the door, and passed out into the storm. The wind and salt spray dashed into the faces of both. Schuyler, with his precious burden made his way, as best he could, to a group of rocks. Here he laid Theo down, binding her feet and hands with a piece of rope. This was unnecessary, for she had fainted.

“I can stay here until early morning, they will think the ghost carried her off.” Running to the currant bush, he picked up his large bag and made his way back to Theo’s side. “The gale is already abating, and then, away with daughter and ducats!”

The figure at his feet stirred. He had removed the handkerchief from her mouth.

“Father! Mr. Allston! I can not move my feet or hands!”

“Ha, my pretty bird! You needn’t worry about your father or the young man. I’ll be everythin’ to yer.” He stooped and looked into her face. Theo was now quite herself.

"Am I alive or dreaming," she said half aloud.
"Who is this terrible one, who is with me?
Father! father!" she cried. The winds answered,
father! father!

"Now, young woman, there ain't much use
your makin' a row. You belong to me now, and
your father can't help yer, that's certain."

A great black film passed over her eyes, her
brain reeled. For the second time she fainted.

"She's all right," Schuyler muttered. "She'll
come to herself. Time flies faster than I thought."

"Miss Theo! Miss Theo! Where are you?"
A figure carrying a lantern, approached the rocks.
It was Allston. At a glance, he saw the young
girl's pale face, and above her, stood what looked
to him like a demon, in the dress of a man. With
a cry he dashed forward; a fierce struggle en-
sued, in which Schuyler was thrown down and for
the moment stunned. Bending, Allston tenderly
picked up Theo's senseless form, and hurried back
into the cottage. The lamp was extinguished, but
he soon found a bit of candle and a match, with
which he lighted it. He laid the young girl on
the sofa and poured a few drops of brandy be-
tween her closed teeth.

"She lives," he said.

CHAPTER VI.

"If money be not thy servant, it will be thy master."

"WHERE am I, and what's happened?" Anthony Burton rose wearily from the floor of the cave, like one whose senses were benumbed. He passed his black-gloved hand over his brow as if to clear the cobwebs from his brain.

"I've been dreamin', very strange it all is. Ah! I see, I remember it all now. I came here with Schuyler. Where is the man? He gave me that black lookin' liquid and made me swallow it. I was too ill to resist. It must have been a sleepin' draft. What hour can it be? I have forgotten my watch. Theo most likely has been anxious, and wondered why I did not go to bed. I must see if all is well with her."

He glanced around the chamber, his eyes falling on the open chests and empty bags. "The villain! The wretch! He has robbed me of almost all," he muttered. "There is some gold in that smaller bag, but I'll soon be a beggar, it can't last long. A beggar, a beggar! How I hate the word! No, I have my Theo, he did not take her." Stumbling up the stone steps into the light of day,

for the morning was just breaking, Captain Burton hurriedly passed into the little sitting-room. A candle was dimly burning, and the fire on the hearth was reduced to a heap of smouldering ashes. He could not at first see his daughter's pale face as she lay on the couch, or that of Mr. Allston, as he bent over her rubbing her cold hands. In a moment his eyes became accustomed to the light, and with a cry he pressed forward. Was the still form that of his Theo? He felt he must be dreaming.

He knelt beside her, and tenderly lifted a golden curl that had escaped from its prison.

"My Theo, are yer ill? Yer ought not to be so frightened about yer old father. He's well! Here he is." He passed his hand over her cheeks and brow.

Allston had stepped aside, as the father approached. The captain seemed to be unconscious of his presence.

Theo opened her eyes, a shudder ran through her frame. Seeing her father's face she smiled faintly.

"I am better now, thank you. Where is Mr. Allston? He saved my life."

"I am here, Miss Theo, and am relieved to see you once more yourself! Captain Burton, I feared foul play, and dreaded for your life. We have had a fearful night of it."

Drawing the captain aside, in a few concise words he told him the whole story, from beginning to end.

“The vile wretch, where is he now?”

“That, I do not know, Captain Burton, for when I found your daughter guarded by the fiend, I gave him such a blow, that for a time he must have been somewhat disabled.”

“Who is the man, and what was his object in carrying me off?”

“My Theo, I’ve known him for years. His name is Jack Schuyler. I should have parted from him long ago, but for business reasons considered it best to remain friendly. He saw yer one night when we were in the little sittin’-room. He looked through the window. I’d never allowed him to meet yer, for I knew the soul of the man was black. He wanted, Theo, to court and marry yer. My child, I wouldn’t even let him speak your name with his foul lips.” Theo shivered.

“He has robbed me of almost all my money, but not of my daughter. While I have her, I’ll not fear the hardships that must come to us both. You’ll be brave, my child,” and the captain again with his rough hand smoothed his daughter’s golden hair.

“Yes, father, God helps those who help themselves, and He will not neglect us at this trying

hour. He has saved my life, and frustrated the wicked plans of this man; He has saved me to live for Him and for you, dear father."

She placed both arms around his neck, and Allston, feeling the scene was one too solemn for the eyes of a stranger to witness, passed out of the room.

There was silence, and then Theo said, lifting her head from the cushion on which it had been resting,

"Father, dear, Mr. Allston saved my life. You will thank him for all he has done? I never can!"

"Yes, Theo, I owe him more than I can ever repay. I ain't much at talkin'. Ye'll speak to him yourself, Theo."

It was touching to see the two together. The stern captain, in the hour of adversity, had given place to a crushed but softened old man.

"I feel so much better, dear father, that I think I will rise and open the shutters. It is morning, you know, but still very early."

She crossed the floor, blew out the candle, and unbarred the shutters. The gray mist streamed in.

"How haggard you look, father. Can you not go upstairs and take a little rest?"

"No, Theo, not yet. I must go back to the woodhouse and clear up the place. I've left everythin' in a mess."

Allston found no traces of the wretch. The boat and all had disappeared.

Although the storm had passed off some time before, a silver mist hung over the sea and the gray rocks of Duck Island. The spray was dashing over Shag and Mingo, flinging far and wide its white foam.

Allston stood watching the scene. "A precious stone set in the silver sea," he murmured. His face was flushed, and his heart beat wildly. He was not thinking of the island, but of the fair girl and of the sight he had just witnessed. It stirred something deep down in his heart of hearts. Was it only the picture? No; he loved Theo Burton; there was no denying it. Hers was such a beautiful nature, so simple and confiding. Why should he not ask her to share his life? His family, his cousins, they were all he had—would wish him to choose a bride from the best blood of the land. They were proud, they might be ashamed of Theo. How could they be ashamed of such a lovely creature? His soul revolted at the very thought. The girl was his equal; in all but family she was a lady. No one could think otherwise. She was refined and beautiful. Was there any other woman of his acquaintance who could compare with this sweet young creature?

"Yes, she shall some day bear my name, and the cousins and friends will learn to love her too,"

he said aloud. "The captain says his money is all gone. That matters nothing. I will, in my profession, win a name for myself which Theo Burton will not be ashamed to share."

With these thoughts fresh in his mind, he sauntered into the woodhouse. Here he found the captain busily at work at the floor replacing the boards. As his form darkened the doorway, the old man looked up.

"Ha! it's you, is it, Mr. Allston? Have you come to help me lay the floor? I was doin' some repairin' last night, and did not finish my work. It was here that Joe Schuyler found me. I felt a bit faint, he gave me somethin', I thought it was whiskey but it must have been a sleepin' potion. He poured it down my throat, and then the wretch robbed me!"

The young man found that the captain shrank from speaking further on the painful subject.

"Captain Burton," he said at length with some hesitation, "I have a favor to ask of you. I also come as a robber, but you need not fear me. In these last few weeks I have learnt to love your daughter. I—I want to marry her!"

"You, Mr. Allston, she's all the old man possesses just now. I wouldn't wish to be selfish but—" He stopped, the blue veins in his temples swelled until they appeared like cords. He staggered to the wall, catching at a projecting

beam. No, 'tis impossible, she must never bear your name ! It can not be ! ”

“ You are ill, captain, come let me lead you into the sitting-room, where you can lie down. Remember you have been up all night and have had no rest.”

The old man accepting his arm, half stumbled into the little parlor, falling heavily on the couch.

Allston called the daughter, and together they did all in their power for the sufferer.

Theo realized her father was very ill, and that outside aid was sorely needed.

Turning to her companion, she said :

“ Mr. Allston, can you not take our dory and row over to Star, fetching Mr. James back with you ? He knows so much about medicine ; all the people have him when they are ill. I have never before seen my father so unwell.”

“ Yes, Miss Theo,—I will do anything. There is no time to be wasted ! ”

Theo watched the little boat and its one occupant, until it looked like a speck upon the waves. She bent over her father, he was breathing heavily. How long it would be before the boat could return ! She kept her eyes fastened on the dear face. Sickness, since her mother died, had been almost unknown to them. The hours dragged wearily on, still she sat watching that face. She thought of Mr. Allston and of how he had saved

her. Her pale cheeks flushed as she dreamt of the handsome black eyes. Theo had not yet found out what love was—she knew only that which she felt for her father.

At last the dory returned with Mr. Allston and a stranger, she thought it did not look like Mr. James. Before many minutes both men stood by her side.

“This is Miss Burton?” the stranger remarked, not waiting for Allston’s introduction. “Your father is ill, I see.” He unbuttoned his great coat, and laid it carefully on a chair, placing his hat on top. He wore a black curly wig and great blue goggles, which covered his eyes.

“I’m not Mr. James. My name’s Blacksheath. I met your friend on the wharf and seein’ that he looked troubled, decided to return with him and give you what little assistance I could. Mr. James is not at Gosport just now, he is visiting some of his people on the mainland. I am a regular practitioner and have been restin’ at Star for a short while.”

Taking his little black bag he passed over to the couch, and carefully noted the captain’s respiration and pulse. Opening his bag he took out a case of small vials one of which he chose, called for a glass of water two-thirds full, and carefully dissolved some of the sugar coated pellets. Taking the teaspoon which Theo handed

him, he dipped it into the glass and placed it carefully between the sick man's lips.

"There, Miss Burton, you will find that a great benefit; it will work wonders. In a few hours' time your father will be much better. It is somethin' of a disturbance which we can soon overcome, I hope. What the patient needs is rest and good nursing." He fixed his goggles on Theo's face. "You're a dainty nurse, and one whose lovely eyes would charm away any disease."

The young girl shrank from the doctor's fixed gaze. What was there in the man that made her turn away in disgust. Her ears were unaccustomed to flattery, and the empty words angered her.

"I will do all in my power for my dear father. He is everything to me," she answered coldly.

Beckoning Allston to her, she said,

"Let us carry father upstairs. He will rest more quietly on his own bed." So Dr. Black-sheath and Allston, assisted by Theo, half lifted the old man up the stairs and laid him down on his bed. He was still partially unconscious.

Theo turned to the doctor.

"I hope you will wait until my father's condition changes."

"Yes, Miss Burton, never fear. I will remain here with him a little longer, but by evening he

will be quite himself. Perhaps Mr. Allston will kindly row me back to Star. I will return at an early hour to-morrow. Your father will pull through this attack. It has been brought on by some severe shock. The liquid must be given him every hour, a teaspoon of it. By the way it is about time for another."

Suiting the action to the words, Doctor Black-sheath dipped the spoon into the glass and put it to his patient's lips.

"I should recommend rest, keeping your father free from any excitement."

Theo smiled. "We have in our island home but little that can prove exciting. This trouble was caused by a somewhat unusual occurrence. Our lives are both quiet and peaceful."

The doctor fixed his blue goggles again on the young girl's face. There was something strange about his manner. Allston looked at him in a critical way, then added,

"Do you think, doctor, that your patient will doze all night?"

"Yes, Mr. Allston. To-morrow, as I have said, I will return and see him. You need not row over for me. I can easily find a boat and will not put you to that trouble."

He then gave Theo some directions as to the patient's comfort during the night, and passed out of the room. Allston helped him on with his

great coat, and together they made their way to the landing.

Theo heard the regular stroke of the oars until it died away, and all was silent. She returned to her father, he was sleeping as before, only his color was somewhat more natural. She then ran downstairs to see about supper and to arrange things for the night. The door into the woodhouse stood open as was customary. Theo hurried in, as the fire in the stove was low, to get what fuel she required. She held a candle high up in her hand, that she might see the step. The flickering light fell upon something bright which lay on the floor. She stooped and picked up a gold coin. It was evidently of foreign stamp and resembled the one her father had by mistake given her.

“I will show it to father when he gets better. But—why! here is another and another!” again she stopped, picking up the shining bits and placed them in her pocket.

“Where could father have found them? What does it all mean?” She set the candlestick on a broken chair, which her father had taken in to repair, and passing to the stack of wood picked out the sticks she needed.

She was busily engaged when her attention was attracted by a queer sound, it was like a moan.

“What is it? It comes from the enclosure, father’s den, I think.”

The partition divided a part of the woodhouse, and in this the captain kept his tools. It was locked and he always held the key, never having allowed his daughter to enter, as he said it was full of dust and cobwebs and not fit for her to go in.

When Theo would ask if she could not clean it, he replied, "No, child, a man must have some spot he can call his own."

Seeing it only irritated him, the young girl let the matter drop.

Once again the sound caught her ear, this time it was louder. She put her eye to the keyhole, but could see nothing.

"Can it be the wind," she said to herself, "or some poor imprisoned owl that made his way in there when father was at work? I have heard the same noise at night. Yes, it must be an owl."

The sound had ceased. "Poor creature, I wish I could let you out! I will, when I find the key."

Taking up her candle and the sticks of wood, she returned to the kitchen. A fine blaze rewarded her efforts. Soon the porridge was boiling and the teakettle singing its cheerful song. Theo spread the table with a snowy cloth, placed on it two plates, two knives and forks and two glasses with other necessary things, not forgetting the teacups and saucers and a pretty vase of golden-rod, which she had picked several days before but which was yet quite fresh.

How strange it seemed to place no chair for her father. He would, she felt, soon be with them again.

Just then Mr. Allston entered. "I have only now returned, Miss Theo. Dr. Blacksheath will come again to-morrow. You have, I understand, all the directions for the night?"

"Yes," she answered absently. "Thank you so much for your trouble. But supper is ready, Mr. Allston. Sit right down and eat something. You must be exhausted."

"I will take you at your word, Miss Theo, for I'm as hungry as a bear! This salt air is certainly a fine thing for an appetizer."

"I will pour you out a cup of tea and then run up to father and see if he needs me. The doctor said he would sleep for some time longer but it is the hour for his medicine and he will later need some nourishment."

Theo poured out a cup of fragrant tea, and placing a plate of nicely browned toast and a pat of butter by the young man's side, she went upstairs to her father's room.

In a few moments she returned, saying cheerfully, "Father is breathing quietly, like a babe, and I can see he is better, although he did not rouse or speak to me. You are ready for the porridge, Mr. Allston, are you not?"

"No, I am ready for you, Miss Theo. Now sit

down and try to eat something yourself. You must be quite exhausted. Let me be butler. You have waited so often on me, let me return the compliment."

"Yes, but you are our guest, and I am only Captain Burton's daughter."

Allston had risen and removed the steaming mess of porridge from the stove, pouring it into a china dish, which Theo had placed within a safe distance of the fire.

"You make a good cook as well as a butler; I am quite sure you must have had some previous experience."

"Yes, we college men are accustomed to getting up suppers, and doing all kinds of things. When a fellow lives away from home for any length of time, he learns to be his own seamstress, cook and in fact jack of all trades. Miss Theo, I wish you knew my cousins, they are all the connections I have, you know."

"Will they not some day come to the island and be our guests? We have not much money now. My father said he had been robbed of almost all. We are poor but God will take care of us; I do not fear for the future. Are many people in the world poor, Mr. Allston?"

"Yes, many, very many, the cry of suffering and poverty rises up from—"

He stopped. "What is that noise?" A low

moan was plainly heard. "It comes from the direction of the woodhouse."

"Do not be frightened. I was taken in tonight, myself, not long ago. It is only a poor owl, who quite innocently by my father, has been made prisoner."

"Oh! What was I saying? Well—Miss Burton, I have something on my mind, which I must tell you."

"What is it, Mr. Allston? Is it a secret?"

"Yes, a secret just between you and me."

"I never had a secret entrusted to me. Is it a real one?"

"Yes, a real one."

There was an earnest look in the young man's eyes as Theo glanced toward him. His voice shook so that he could hardly control it.

"Theo, I love you. Love you better than I have ever loved any woman. You are like my dead sister in some things but will you not be my beloved wife?"

Theo looked puzzled. "Love me! Yes it's so kind of you to love me. It's nice to be liked by such a good man as you are. I always wanted a brother and you are just what I've always thought a brother would be like."

"A brother? Oh! can you not understand? I do not love you as a brother but as a lover."

"Love me, Mr. Allston?"

"Yes, love you, just as your father loved your mother when years ago he asked her to share his joys and sorrows. Miss Burt—Theo, do not say no!"

He was standing in front of her, waiting pleadingly for her answer, and catching her little hand in his, he pressed it to his lips. Theo did not attempt to draw it away.

"Mr. Allston, you can teach me to love you. I like you now very, very much. Indeed I do—and—"

But her lover had caught her in his arms.

"Theo, nothing can ever part us now! I will teach you, my dear one, what the dictionary definition gave, what it all meant and as the years roll on, we will be glad of the compact we have made to-night."

Theo freed herself from his gentle embrace. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes shone like stars, as she answered:

"You must be patient with me, Mr. Allston, and tell father all about it. I belong to him, you know. Really I must run away now and see about my invalid. Good night!"

"You will allow me to close the shutters, will you not?"

"Yes, if you want to very, very much."

"Thanks, for letting me do something. But please, I must be repaid for my trouble." He bent over and impressed a kiss on Theo's white brow. "Thank you. Good night, my beloved!"

CHAPTER VII.

“Mysteries are due to secrecy.”

“Mystery magnifies danger, as a fog the sun.”

THE next day found Captain Burton much better. Doctor Blacksheath, coming to see him in the afternoon, gave a most favorable report. Before he left the sick room he changed the medicine and held a long conversation with Theo as to the care of the invalid.

After the physician had gone, the young girl turned to her lover, saying :

“Is it not strange, Dr. Blacksheath at times talks like an educated man but very often he lapses into the most ungrammatical English. I can not understand him, he has become a perfect enigma to me.”

“Yes, I have noticed the same thing, Theo. I cannot make the man out; he impresses me as being a most peculiar character. I feel suspicious all the time and yet I know not why. Are you conscious of the way he glances at you?”

“Yes. My whole nature seems to shrink from the very touch of his hand, or the sound of his

voice. How strange it is that some natures attract, while others only fill one with repulsion."

"Yes, Theo, God has given to every human soul a wonderful power of discernment. I like not this man and shall keep my eye on him, even though he probably is a most unobjectionable person. Dear one, will you not come out with me on the rocks? The morning is mild for November; surely we can not have many more such days."

The young girl picked up her shawl, which was lying near by on a chair, and followed her lover to their favorite nook among the rocks. Away off they could plainly see the doctor's little boat as it steered for Star. A soft sea breeze was blowing and the sunshine streamed over all, making the mica in the rocks around them glitter like diamonds. At last Theo spoke.

"Will you be with us, Mr. Allston, through the winter?"

"Mr. Allston! *Guy*, you mean! Is it so hard for you to learn to speak my name? No, dear, early in December I will have to return home. I've had a long vacation and my health is much improved. Business waits for no man, you know. But speaking of my name, reminds me of something that was once said to me. I was talking to a young girl, whom I had but shortly before met. In the course of conversation she said she could always detect what a person's name was by

studying their expression, features, etc. She said a Joe always looked like a Joe, a Martha like a Martha, a Susan like a Susan. I then asked her to tell me what mine was. Fixing her dark eyes on me, she replied, ‘Yours, Mr. Allston? Why, you look to me like a Guy!’”

Theo laughed.

“ You see I did not know how to take it, considering it rather a doubtful compliment. Perhaps you feel the same and do not like to call me by it.”

“ No, Mr.—Guy, I mean, that is rather unkind; how could I have such a thought in my head? Must you really go away in December? Father and I,” she blushed, “ will miss you very, very much. Our little island is a dreary spot in winter. The color seems to fade out of the world—our world—and the dull gray skies bend over the great waste of leaden waters. The islands are bound with a girdle of ice, which appears as the tides rise and fall. Here and there dark seaweed clings to the rocks, making the contrasts in white and black very striking. Nothing ever disturbs the solitude but the cry of the birds and the moan of the harsh sea, as it breaks against the rocks.”

“ You are an artist, Theo. I feel that I can almost see the picture.”

“ When the snow comes we are shut off from the outside world. At night the wind rises and

the snow flakes whirl and whirl, clinging to the rocks for protection. But the stars, Guy, are so beautiful and clear; they talk to one. Somehow, mother seems to be nearer me in winter than in summer. Do you remember what Longfellow says about the stars being ‘the forget-me-nots of the angels’? The northern-lights flare and stream through the darkness, making the heavens appear first crimson then orange and blue, while a throbbing, pulsating, rosy or yellow flush is seen at the zenith. Orion is grandly sublime.”

“ You have, in fact dear, a wonderful stage all to yourself. Theo, you see beauty in everything in nature.” He lovingly took her hand in his. “ I have never before met any woman with real soul life such as you have, except my mother and sister, and both have left me,” he added bitterly. “ The young girl I once loved, was fond only of flattery and attention; the ballroom and theatre were more to her than nature ever could be. She was as unlike you, Theo, as the sea bird is to the lark. The sea bird keeps near the world, all the time dipping her wings into the sparkling waves, she never soars very high; but the lark, singing, wings its way ever higher and higher, until at times it is lost to sight in the blue heavens.”

“ If I am a painter, you are a poet, Guy. Your ideas are so beautiful.”

“ I am a poor poet, Theo. You will find as

you know me better, that I am very practical and earthly, a very uninteresting personage. You, dear, are a host in yourself."

"But, Guy, I do worry about things and I know that is wrong. We should 'cast all our care upon the One who careth for us.'"

"I should not imagine you ever worried, Theo. Do you know, I used to fret about things, and I will tell you how I broke myself of it. I knew troubles were sure to come to me as long as I continued to live in this wicked world, so I made up my mind to be a philosopher. The disturbing thoughts were apt to keep up a regular Dervish dance, as round and round they whirled, until I felt quite faint and dizzy. This they would do, until a new trouble came and drove out the first; then another and another followed. Strange as it might appear, one began to look forward curiously to any new vexation that came to darken the horizon, and thus each as it approached was easier to be borne. If an uncongenial person crossed my path, I tried the museum method of classification and pinned him to some particular card, where he was numbered and classified. When you find out where people belong, you can more easily get along with their various idiosyncracies. We all of us are a bit queer. If we were not we would not be interesting."

"Yours is a good method, Guy. I have so

often thought how alone we mortals are, no matter how near and dear friends are. We live in ourselves, no one but God can see the struggles; the world sees only the defeats and victories. Father and I have always been together and yet dear father so often misunderstands my motives, when I am trying my very best to please him. I fall so far short of what I should be, that he does not realize how hard I have tried. God knows, however, and the thought comforts me."

"We all of us feel the same, Theo. Your experience is only that which is common to all mortals. You have studied yourself, have become an interesting subject to yourself and thus you are interesting to me. Some future day when the world knows my dear one, the friends you make will feel the same."

"No, Guy, no one will ever care for me as you do. You love me too much. In time I will be quite spoilt. But really, I must run away now. The time flies so quickly when I am with you. I must go upstairs and see how father is."

"Stop, Theo, I have forgotten something. Just as Doctor Blacksheath stepped into the boat, old Peter, who you know came over for him, slipped this note into my hand, it is for you."

He placed in her hand a soiled, crumpled bit of paper, on which was written in a scrawled hand: "For *Miss Theo Burton*." The young girl was

standing by the door as she unfolded the sheet and read aloud the following lines to her lover.

“DEAR MISS THEO:

“Bennaye tolle me I’d better right yer a letter, and send it along with Peter, the loons been a cryin’ the last too nights, the hens is a layin’ and Bennaye and i is better than when you was here. Wall Bennaye and i was settin’ in our room, when ole Babbs ghost walked right in. He had on the butcher’s frock, leathern belt, and the stripes on the dress of the man shone like pewter after yer rub it. Says he with a murderous looke in his eye, says he, ‘the gal on Duck Island is in—’ Bennaye called out, ‘who is yer,’ he got up and got. Bennaye took a chill ; it run rite down his back bone ; had to give him sasparilla and a plaster on his stomach. The creeps overtook me ; my wool ain’t lyin’ down yet. I tried sugar and water on it. Bennaye and I got into bed, such a scratchin’ and a tearryin’ we heard under the window. Bennaye says to me, ‘Nabbaye, someone on Duck’s goin’ to die.’ We both got a chill, ain’t warm yet, thought I’d better warn yer. We’ll have a ‘tan toaster’ by night.

“NABBAYE.”

Guy Allston burst out laughing. “Well, that’s the greatest epistle I ever listened to. You ought to keep it, Theo, as a specimen. I have rarely ever met such curious, interesting old fossils as Bennaye and Nabbaye. They certainly must have

wonderful imaginations. Poor old souls, they evidently believe some great danger is threatening you. Ghosts seem to be common things here, Theo. Have you ever been able to discover what it was we saw on that awful night? I could swear I was as wide awake as I am now."

"No, Guy, I have not. Once before, in a very real dream, this figure stood by my bed. She carried a light in her hand and used the same words as those you heard. 'He will come! He will come again!' In the first part of my dream I seemed to be in a boat, tossing on the waves, when a figure rose out of the water and stretching out her hands implored me to save her. Just then in the greatest horror I awoke. By my side stood a woman, the image of the one whom the other night we both saw. Her expression was one of the most melancholy I have ever seen; a fiendish smile lighted her face. I screamed as she bent over me. The creature disappeared—melted away. It was all very real."

"I do not believe as a general rule in spirits, Theo, but I should say, that the islands were haunted by the ghosts of pirates, who, after their many crimes, were not able to rest in their graves. Your dream has interested me."

She was still standing by the door, the letter in her hand.

"I do feel somewhat uncanny about this letter,

Guy. You will take care of me, I know, if any trouble does come."

"Do you think I would forget you, dearest?"

Again she started to go up the stairs but Guy Allston detained her.

"Theo," he said, "if your father is strong enough, tell him all about our engagement and ask him to forgive me for being so hasty. I spoke to him about it but I fear it was a shock."

The young girl hurried up to her father's room. The November sun was setting, its rays fell upon the old man's face and on his gray hair. He turned his head as his daughter entered.

"I feel so much better, Theo. When I awoke from sleep, I began to be like my old self. Do yer know, child, I wonder if the villain Schuyler could not have given me a strong sleeping draught. The doctor yer had—where did yer find him?"

"At Star, father. Mr. James, whom we wanted to get had gone away, and Guy, Mr. Allston I mean, found this man and brought him back in the boat."

"'Twas strange, Theo, what a heavy feeling come over me, I couldn't rouse myself sufficiently to speak to the doctor, yet when he came to me, I was conscious there was somethin' in him that I shrank from. I felt chilled to the marrow, even when he felt my pulse."

"How remarkable, father. Mr. Allston and I

have the same aversion to Doctor Blacksheath. He talks as if he understood his business. At any rate, you are better, his medicines have done you good. As you are stronger, I want to tell you a little bit of news."

"News for me, Theo? Have yer heard from the villain who stole my gold?"

"No, father," she shuddered. "Do not let us speak of him. It is only that—that Mr. Allston has asked your daughter to be his wife. I could not understand it all at first, but I do now. He is so good to me father; some day I will bear his name."

"His name!" Theo was frightened at her father's horror-stricken expression. "God forbid that my child should ever bear that name!"

"Why, father, you are trembling. You are weak after your illness!" She placed one arm around his bent form.

"No! It ain't that—not that! It can't ever be, my child. I've not often crossed yer."

"He loves me, and you know nothing against him!"

"Not against him, but—the name. Theo, don't ask me. I can't tell yer."

Captain Burton turned his face away, while in his heart he murmured, "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation."

"When you are stronger, father, you will be better able to think it over."

The old man groaned. "Oh, my Theo! My Theo!" he cried.

The daughter saw an agonized look in his eyes.

"Leave me, Theo. I'll talk it over with Mr. Allston to-morrow. Please tell him so."

"I have forgotten something, father, the key of the partition in the woodhouse. I think a poor owl has flown in and is now a prisoner there. Every night and morning since your illness, not being able to go in, I have placed food under the door, having cut a little piece of the wood out. I knew you'd want me to look after the creature and your other pets. You are so kind-hearted. I tried to see what the owl looked like, but the place was dark and I could distinguish nothing."

A close observer would have seen the captain start.

"Did the poor thing moan?"

"Yes, frightfully, but only at times. It sounded unlike any bird that I have ever heard, such a human moan. I can remember for some years past, to have heard the same sound, generally at night."

"Well, Theo, I've a great fancy for animals and I've from time to time kept a pet in the enclosure, or (my den, as yer call it.) Thank yer for bein' so thoughtful as to feed the creatures. Yer see the sounds are explained. I never allowed

yer to go inside the place, for I thought yer might be frightened, not knowin' they was there. I have always cleaned up the room myself and fed the creatures."

At that moment a shadow darkened the doorway. Theo looked up. To her surprise, her eyes encountered the blue goggles of Doctor Black-sheath.

"Ah! I frightened you, Miss Burton. I will explain my presence. I no sooner reached home when I found I had left the wrong medicine for your father. Has he taken more than one dose?"

"No, doctor, we have given him but one tea-spoon of the liquid; it is only just the hour for the second. You are here in time to save me from killing him."

The doctor gave a sigh of satisfaction as he continued, "I am relieved." Turning to this patient he said, reassuringly, "Yer look better, captain, than when I last saw yer."

"Aye! aye! I feel better, thank yer. I have been ill in my life but seldom, and this shock was brought on most likely by the black mixture the villain gave me. It took time to do its work. My daughter has told yer about our trouble."

"Yes, I've heard the strange story." The blue goggled eyes rested on Theo's face.

She turned away, feeling as if fascinated, yet she shrank from him.

Doctor Blacksheath began to prepare the medicine as before. He took a tiny homeopathic vial from the small leathern case, and turning to Theo said,

"This is just the thing. I don't know how I could have made such a grave mistake. The vial I used this morning I had carelessly forgotten to mark. Captain Burton, in one-half hour I should like yer to take a teaspoon of this, and continue the dose every hour. I have a great favor to ask of you, Miss Burton. The wind has risen, and old Peter, who rowed me over this morning, refused to return, as he said a regular 'tan toaster' * was comin' up. I hired a boat and rowed myself over. The sea was and is still, pretty rough. I fear to return. Can you put me up for the night?"

Theo, somewhat taken aback by the request, turned to her father, saying,

"Father, you will be glad to offer the hospitality of our roof to Doctor Blacksheath?"

"Yer welcome, doctor, welcome. The heart of Burton never yet refused the cover of his roof to a friend. Make yerself at home. I owe my recovery to yer. Do yer really think it necessary for me to take more medicine? I feel almost well, and with yer permission, will sit up awhile in that large chair yonder by the window. I want to watch the storm comin' up."

* Tan toaster—A gale.

"I think it best for yer to remain in bed, but if yer feel restless, perhaps yer might sit up for a short time. Only for a time, Miss Burton. You must watch and see your father does not overdo it. With such a lovely nurse as your daughter, captain, yer should soon recover. She is grace, beauty and all, combined."

The fulsome remark disgusted Theo, and she hastily left the room.

"Neither my daughter or I are accustomed to flattery, Doctor Blacksheath."

"Ah! I regret I have wounded the fair one. I will, captain, wander out on the rocks for an hour or more."

He left the room.

No sooner had the doctor departed, than Guy Allston appeared, saying in his cheerful way,

"You are looking like your old self, captain. To-morrow you will be around with us as of old. Dr. Blacksheath tells me he is afraid to return on account of the storm, and that you have invited him to spend the night."

"Yes, 'twould be a shame to have the man go out in the very teeth of this wind; these November blows are treacherous."

Allston stepped to the table on which stood the glass of medicine, all ready for use.

"This is your medicine, captain. Theo tells

me Dr. Blacksheath made a mistake in what he gave you, and for this reason he has returned. Let me take the glass into the other room for a moment. Your daughter wishes it."

The father nodded his assent.

In a few moments Allston returned, a strange look of contempt and anger on his face.

"Captain Burton," he exclaimed huskily, "it is unnecessary for you to take the liquid"—he stopped as if to gain breath—"I have tested it, and find it is rank poison."

The captain trembled. "What mean yer, man? Rank poison?—poison! But the doctor?"

"He is either a madman or a would-be murderer! From the very first I doubted him, as did your child. I have kept my eye on him. The other medicine was harmless. He has returned to murder you."

The captain was speechless. A something passed over his face. The thought seemed to give him strength. He rose from his bed.

"We must be watchful and on our guard. Mr. Allston, there is somethin' rotten in all this that we must fathom. I have in my mind a clue, but as the old sayin' has it, 'We must save our breath to cool our porridge.'"

He took Allston's hand. "Theo has told me everythin'. Must I give her to yer? Perhaps,

did yer know all, yer wouldn't want her. Guard her well, she's in danger. I feel it, somethin' tells me that we have not heard the last of our late trouble."

CHAPTER VIII.

“I will render to the man according to his work.”

TWILIGHT had faded into night. A solemn stillness brooded over all.

Guy Allston stood by Theo's side. The lovers were in the little sitting-room, and the young girl was just about lighting the oil lamp; she held the match in her hand.

“Do not light the lamp yet, darling. Let us have a quiet time here all by ourselves. *Doctor Blacksheath* is still outside, is he not?” His lip curled disdainfully, and the black eyes glowed fiercely. “Since we have found out the man's real character, that he is a would-be murderer, it will be desirable to keep our eyes open. Theo, your father has given you into my hands, and I will not fail him now. I would die for you, if need be. No one shall harm a hair of your head.”

“The good God meant that we should love each other always;” and Guy whispered,

“Yes, darling, always, always.”

The lovers were standing with their backs to the door, and did not see the stealthy figure crouching there. Schuyler heard the last words,

and hissingly echoed them. "Always! always! We'll see about that!"

"Let me light the lamp, Theo. There, give me the match. How cheerful the little sitting-room looks to-night!"

"Yes, I had the same thought, and so have come in to join you." It was Doctor Blacksheath who spoke. "You two seem mighty fond of each other. Engaged? I thought so. Yer needn't try to tell such an old codger as I am. I can read all the signs."

Both Theo and her lover looked much annoyed at his words.

"I won't disturb you by comin' in will I?"

"No, doctor, not in the least," Allston answered in a most polite way. "You will find this chair by the table very comfortable, and here are some books which perhaps you may desire to look into." With these words he left the room; Theo followed.

When the lovers reached the hallway, Allston turned to his beloved.

"Dear one, do not be alone with that man one moment, or allow him to see your father, unless I am present. We must to-night be on our guard. You will promise me this, Theo?"

"I promise all, everything, Guy."

Supper was soon prepared and partaken of by the three. With the doctor's permission, Theo

carried up to her invalid a fragrant cup of tea and a slice of toast, neatly placed on a tray.

"That is all my patient must eat to-night," Doctor Blacksheath pompously said. "We must always take great care of the digestive organs, for neglect of them brings on many ailments. Has your father taken the medicine that I prepared, Miss Burton?"

"No, doctor, I am sorry to say, that while you were out of doors, an accident befell it. The glass containing the liquid was emptied by Mr. Allston, he was looking for something to—"

"Yes, I wanted to get the captain a glass of cold water, the fault is mine. Will you not prepare some more for him?"

The muscles of the young man's face never even twitched, as the blue goggles gazed fixedly at him.

"Yes, I'll do so. I am, however, sorry for the delay, and hope no harm will be done."

Theo left the room carrying the tray. She dared not look at Allston, but her heart said: "You will prepare another, false man, but it shall share the fate of the last."

Captain Burton took his tea and toast from Theo's hands. He was sitting in the chair by the window.

"Thank yer, my daughter, thank yer. Mr. Allston has told yer what we suspect. Be on yer

guard, my child; I shall go to bed with my clothes on, so as to be ready for any emergency. Give them to me now, Theo."

She did as she was bidden, and left the chamber. In about ten minutes she returned to find her father quite dressed. In his hand was a pistol.

"I have in an inner pocket, Theo, placed all the little store of gold the wretch left,—all that remains to us. I don't know this Blacksheath, but believe him to be an accomplice of Schuyler's, the man who would even have robbed me of my child."

"Is this true, father? Are you quite sure you are right?"

"Yes, Theo; that is why I have warned yer. Mr. Allston I think knows why I suspect Blacksheath. But we must try to appear natural, and act our parts as best we can."

"Is there no way of putting the supposed doctor under arrest?"

"No, we must wait until we have stronger proofs, until we can——"

"Father, I hear them pushing away their chairs from the table. Quick, in a few moments Doctor Blacksheath will be here. Slip on this gown and get between the sheets. You must appear to have gone to bed for the night."

Captain Burton did as was suggested. Theo saw

him tremble, and realized that her father was an old man, and that if worse came worse, he was in a poor position to defend either himself or her. She placed the pistol under his pillow. Hardly were these arrangements completed, than Doctor Blacksheath and Guy Allston entered the room. Theo stepped near the door, and closely watched the doctor as he dissolved a fine white powder in the glass, three-quarters full of water.

"I hope nothin' will happen to this," he said lightly. "I am sorry captain, you did not let me know earlier about your medicine bein' thrown out."

There was something in the voice, something unmistakable in the manner of the man.

Captain Burton felt he had met him before. Could it be possible that this Doctor Blacksheath was his old comrade, Schuyler. If it were, he was a good actor, a wonderful actor.

"Yes, 'twould be a pity," he coldly answered.

He must keep up the farce for a while longer, *that* he realized.

"Shall I turn your pillow, captain?" the doctor said.

"No, thank yer. I'd rather have it as it is;" he passed his hand underneath the pillow and grasped his pistol firmly, until the cords and sinews felt as if they would snap.

"Well, if there's nothing to be done, Mr. Alls-

ton, we two can go downstairs and have a smoke."

"The suggestion is a good one, let us go," answered Allston, coldly.

A conflict was raging within him. He longed to knock down the hypocrite, and yet for the present he must continue to be polite to him. The blood surged to his head, and his heart beat loudly.

Down the stairs the two men went, passing into the little sitting-room.

Theo had left her father's chamber some minutes before, and had sought the quiet of this place. She rose as they entered, and passed out of the door. The supper things had been washed and carefully put away. She returned to her father's chamber. As soon as she entered, the invalid bent forward excitedly.

"Is all quiet below, Theo? Take this vile stuff and pour it out of the window, then wash the glass well, and fill it with water, about two-thirds full, just as it is now. Do yer understand?"

The daughter did as she was bidden.

"Father, if you should want anything during the night, will you ring this little bell. I have brought it up from the kitchen, and will place it by your side on this table."

"I hope we won't need to raise any alarm, Theo. I thank yer for your foresight. I must say I do feel a bit uneasy! I'm sure there 'll be

trouble here to-night. All we can do is, to be ready for it when it comes."

The young girl rose to leave the room.

"Don't go downstairs yet awhile. Sit by me just as yer used to when yer were little."

"I believe you love me more than you did then, father. You used to be so reserved and silent, that I feared you very much, yet loved you too."

She knelt by his bed, and laid her hand on her father's gray locks, the other she slipped into one of his.

"Theo, I have a little ring, which I wish yer would wear." The captain took from his vest pocket a curious old-fashioned gold band, the antique setting held one diamond and two opals, one on either side of the brilliant.

"What a beautiful thing it is, and where did you get it?"

"It belonged to a person—a lady—who died."

"Why do you tremble, father?" She noticed that the hand which held the ring shook.

"I'm not strong, that's all. The memory of the beautiful creature never leaves me."

"Did you meet her before you knew mother?"

"Yes, when I was young, quite a boy in fact. There, slip it on yer finger."

Theo examined the trinket carefully. On the inner side there were two initials intertwined—B. and A.

"Yer see, my child, the initials are the same as those of Mr. Allston and yourself. Ask yer lover to use it for the engagement ring. Yer lover! how strange the words sound."

"Thank you, father. Guy will thank you too, for thinking of our happiness at this time. But it is growing late. All seems quiet below. Do you know the hypocrite, Doctor Blacksheath, insists upon sleeping on the sofa in the sitting-room. I wish we could lock him in there for the night. Do not excite yourself about anything. Guy is strong enough to fight our battles. I do not fear, come what may."

"Take care, Theo; be cautious, my daughter. The wolf often wanders around in sheep's clothing."

"I must go downstairs for a few moments, father. The silver forks and spoons are there, and to-night I will bring them up into my room and hide them."

"Yes, yer right, bring them up."

Theo passed down the stairs, the door into the woodhouse was open. Her lover and the stranger were, she supposed, in the sitting-room. The door was almost closed, and she had neglected to look in.

"Who can have opened the woodhouse door? I shut it myself on leaving the kitchen," she said.

Taking a candle from the table, she held it up

above her head, peering into the dark woodhouse. As she did this, she heard a noise—it came from behind the partition, the place called her father's den. There was a scuffle—a groan—and all was again quiet.

"The animals are having a lively time of it. Perhaps they are fighting over the supper I gave them before I went upstairs. It is strange that my father has never allowed me to enter that room, when he knows how fond of animals I am."

For some minutes she stood, the candle in her hand, looking like a wax image, her face quite bloodless. The sitting-room clock in its solemn way struck twelve.

Shaking herself as if just rousing from some trance, she closed the door into the woodhouse, and passed up the stairs. The parlor door was shut—Doctor Blacksheath must have gone to bed.

She wondered where her lover was, and why he did not come to bid her good night. Stepping into her father's room, she found him wide awake and reading.

"Twelve o'clock and all's well, Theo," he spoke solemnly.

"Father, have you seen Guy?"

"No, it's strange. He always comes to ask if I want anythin' for the night. He is probably either watchin' or tired, and has long since turned in, knowin' you were with me. Keep yer light

burnin', my child. Don't undress; also lock yer door into the hall. If any one enters yer chamber, 'twill be through mine or by the window. I'm a good watchdog, and stronger than yer think."

"I am not afraid, father, but I am very sleepy, for I have not slept for several nights, you know."

She kissed him and passed into her little white chamber. After locking the door into the hall she knelt down by the side of her bed and prayed for her beloved father, and for her lover, that God would bless and keep them both in His wise and loving care. Then rising from her knees, she took the silver, placed it between the mattress and the feather bed, removed the white spread, and threw her weary self down to sleep.

"How good it is to rest," she murmured. The blue eyes closed, and the tired girl was fast asleep. Her dreams were broken and strange. Again she seemed to be in a boat, her lover by her side; he was placing a ring on her finger. Two opals and one beautiful diamond were held in the quaint setting—the opals glowed like fire. Her lover was just saying,

"You will wear this, Theo, always for my sake," when from out of the water rose the figure of a woman. She stretched out her hand, as if to snatch the trinket from the girl's fingers.

"It is mine! It is mine! Give it to me," she screamed.

Theo awoke. Did the woman say the words, "Save me! save me!" or did she utter them herself? A horrible picture met her eyes. The room was as bright as day, the house was on fire. She tried to rise from her bed, but a hand pressed against her throat, and over her bent the figure of one whom she had but twice before seen. The livid face of a woman, whose wild blue eyes, starting from their sockets glared at her. A voice, was it a woman's voice? It sounded half animal, as it screamed,

"He will come! He will come again! You shall die, shall die! He loves you! He loved me once!" The pressure of the fingers grew stronger.

"Mercy! mercy!" she gasped.

A figure entered—a man's. It was that of Doctor Blacksheath. He dragged the woman away from her victim, and flung her aside. She turned and rushed at him like a tiger, burying her fingers in his flesh.

"Die, demon!" he cried. "I've been patient with yer long enough," and springing at her, he gave a blow which felled the creature to the floor. Rushing to the bed, he caught the paralyzed Theo in his arms.

"Help, Guy! Guy! father, help!"

The smoke was suffocating, the crackling of the flames seemed very near.

"My child, I'm comin', I'm comin'!" She heard her father's voice. She was being dragged somewhere, she could not see where; the smoke blinded her. She prayed.

"The stairs are burnt away! Great God!" the man cried. "I'll not perish just at the moment of victory. Jump, woman, it's yer only hope!"

"My Theo!" rang the agonized voice of her father. "My Theo!"

Too late! An awful crash, then a column of flame shot up toward heaven. It was their funeral pyre.

The flames, as upward and upward they mounted, seemed at last to touch the very clouds. Showers of sparks fell on the gray rocks like rain. The hissing and crackling increased, a mad roar could alone be heard, followed by the noise of crashing timbers. The storm had ceased. The foam crested waves playfully touched the shores of the little island just as they had always done. Had they no heart that they sang their old songs of joy and peace?

There was one heart, one weary, tired heart, who stood alone, an outcast and almost a beggar, before the smouldering ruins of his home.

He heard the sound of the waves, but appeared as if turned into stone.

The captain's gray locks were tossed by the wind; he wore no covering on his head. There had been time only to save his own life. The eyes of the old man were raised to heaven in blank despair. Was he looking to see his child enter the home of the pure in heart? His hands were pressed together in prayer.

"God be merciful to me a sinner!" No eyes but those of the Master saw his sufferings. How long he stood there he never knew.

It was morning—a November morning. The coloring had faded out of the skies, and out of his world.

The snow was falling softly on the rocks and on the smoking ruins of his little cottage. The flakes fell so noiselessly and like a benediction, seemed in his ears, to whisper the old promise. "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

He bent his head.

"Oh, Lord! I thank thee I am forgiven! I shall follow her! There will not be many years of waitin', the time's short. I'm an old man. I must confess all, before I can join my Theo, and stand before my God."

He walked with bowed head to the landing place. The dory bearing her name, "Theodosia," was in its accustomed place. The other boat

he could see, the one belonging to the man who had ruined him.

Pushing the dory into the water, he jumped in, and with a few strokes of the oars, was soon some distance from the island. As the captain turned away his gaze from the spot which all these years had grown so dear to him, his eyes fell upon the slab of marble which bore his Cicily's name. He knew that he would see it again never more. A great lump in his throat choked him, a film passed over his eyes, hot tears fell upon his hard brown hands.

Captain Burton, exhausted and almost unconscious, reached Star Island. How he got there in his weakened condition, he never knew. Old Peter while out fishing, saw that something was wrong, and towed him in.

Nabbaye and Bennaye insisted upon his being carried to their little shanty. They did all in their power for him, as week after week he lay tossing on his sick bed, in his delirium describing the awful tragedy, over and over again.

The people on Star had seen the blaze on Duck Island and the crimson reflection on the sky, but they thought it simply a bonfire; it being late in the autumn, at which times bonfires were common.

Old Nabbaye went wandering around like a lost soul, sobbing as if her heart would break, and crying,

"My prettye one, my prettye one! The dream wa' real after all. We could na saver yer, but the angels caught yer an carried yer right up into glory. Bennaye an we'll have to wait for yer to come an fetch us, if we ain't too big to carry."

For six weeks Captain Burton hung between life and death. Then came a slow convalescence, that weary coming back to life, which the old find it so hard to bear, when they are alone and helpless.

By midwinter, the captain had grown so much stronger that he was able to start for the mainland. It took almost all of his small store of gold to return to the poor fisherfolk that which they had spent for him. He could never repay them for their kindness.

And one day he sailed away. There were tears in his eyes, and in those of the simple folk who had been so good to him. They knew they would never again see the "black-handed captain of Duck."

After he had left them, they always spoke of him as "The man with a history."

Early in the spring, some of the people went over to Duck Island. All they found, however, among the charred ruins of the cottage, were some blackened bones. Digging a hole in the earth, they buried them, and then jumping in their boats they rowed hurriedly away, saying the

place was haunted. They had seen strange forms and heard strange sounds.

Packed with the clothes of the man who had lived but a few days among them at Gosport, he who called himself Doctor Blacksheath, they had found a goodly store of gold pieces, bearing a foreign stamp. The bag had been buried by the far-sighted doctor, and to this day no one has ever discovered its hiding place.

It was long before the islanders again visited Duck. The tragedy became a story, and the story in time, was forgotten.

CHAPTER IX.

“Out from the busy sun of life, into the shade and calm,
The still hours of Eve bring soft and soothing balm.”

ALONE and footsore, Captain Burton wandered from state to state, from town to town. His money was almost exhausted, but before it was quite gone he hoped to find the home of Mr. Allston’s cousins, that he might tell them of their kinsman’s sad and tragic death. Theo would want him to do it, it would be her wish, he felt. His angel Theo seemed always near him, never very far away.

Late one day in the month of June, he reached the village of A. and stopped before the door of a large white house with green blinds. He had been directed there by a woman, who touched by the old man’s weary dejected appearance, stood looking after him, wondering where he had come from, and what he desired of the ladies at the white house.

Lifting the great brass knocker, he let it fall with a resounding thud. The door opened, a black serving man stood before him,

"Can I see one of the ladies of the family? I've a message for them," he added slowly.

The respectable butler, in his fine broadcloth, looked somewhat majestic, as, holding his gray woolly head very stiffly, he answered, eyeing the shabby captain from top to toe.

"Do yer suppose I'se gwyn to let yer in? Yer miserable white trash, yer! Dar ain't nebber allowed no beggar whatsoever to enter der mansion. What's yer name, and whare's yer goin to?"

The captain's face flushed; the once proud reserved man was humble, and timid as a child.

"I'm Captain Burton, and I've traveled a long way to find the cousins of Mr. Guy Allston."

The black man's face beamed with joy.

"Massa Guy! Yer know whar he's livin'? We've been that worried 'bout him, my ladies has, we've been mos out our minds. Walk in captain, I'll tell the ladies."

He gave the old man a chair in the wide, cool hall, and hurried up the stairs.

The peace of a day in June brooded over all. Outside the grasshoppers and crickets kept up the buzz of insect society life, the bees hovered over their sweets, the birds in the sweeping horse-chestnut trees appeared to be gossiping over the events of the day, their liquid notes fell upon the ears of the old man. How cool it was, and how very quiet.

In a few moments the obsequious darkey returned saying,

"De ladies will be down presently. Dey says ter make yerself comfortable, and git cooled off."

"Thank yer," responded Captain Burton. Somehow he was so weary and hot, that he felt he would like to sit there always. The gray-haired butler strutted through the hall and disappeared behind the dining-room door.

On both sides of the richly paneled hall, there were two large apartments. On the left hand a library, on the right, a long drawing-room. The library was so dark, that the captain could distinguish nothing; but in the drawing-room, one of the blinds was partially opened, letting in a broad band of light, that fell upon the green velvety carpet, with its sprigs of white roses scattered here and there at regular intervals. The soft summer breeze touched the lace curtains, blowing them slowly backwards and forwards, at times making their scalloped edges curl and shiver.

An old-fashioned square piano stood in one corner, and in the opposite, built into the wall, was a large cupboard with glass doors. These were ornamented with wreaths of flowers in white and gold, of a most conventional design. On the shelves of this cupboard were arranged pieces of dainty china, of old English, Dutch, or India manufacture, with a few specimens of rare Vene-

tian glass. Three fiddle-backed chairs stood primly on either side of the fireplace. Between the brass andirons reposed a blue jug, which was filled with feathery asparagus. On the white wooden mantelshelf stood two candelabra with glass pendants, and in the middle a gilt clock, supported by two angels, who appeared unable to bear their burden. Above the mantel, the light fell upon the life-sized portrait of a young and beautiful woman. Her gown was of blue satin, cut low on the shoulders, showing to good advantage the lovely curves of both arms and neck, and was trimmed with swan's-down. One of her beautifully molded hands with its tapering fingers held a red rose, and was crossed over the other. The hair was simply coiled in the back, the features were regular, being clearly cut, but cold like marble.

As the captain's eyes rested upon the queen like woman, he felt a sudden mysterious influence that drew him toward the portrait. He rose slowly from his chair, and passed into the long drawing-room, his tired feet sinking in the velvet carpet, as he noiselessly approached the painting. The fair lady's eyes were fixed on him ; they followed him whichever way he turned.

“It's she! she! oh God!” he groaned. “Hast thou no pity for me? Must that face haunt me forever—forever? Must the curse follow me to my grave?” He turned and hid his face in his

hands, while great sobs shook his frame. He knelt with his back to the portrait and prayed.

"Is it not enough, oh God! I have suffered for years. Take the agony away. Thou hast forgiven me, I know. My Cicily and my Theo have plead for me!" The pent up agony of years was in that cry.

He raised the black gloved hand to heaven and looked at it.

"'Twas you, that did it, not I—I was young."

Two figures entered, they stood watching the old man; his words were too low spoken to reach their ears.

"Hush," said one, the taller of the two, "he is praying."

A ray of light fell upon his gray locks and turned them into silver; it fell upon his clothes, patched and faded, and on his rough brown hands which held a battered straw hat. Someone had given it to him.

"Speak to him, Dorothy. Perhaps he is out of his mind, some poor half mad creature, who has wandered in and having heard of Guy's absence has brought a strange story for our hearing."

"No, Elizabeth, how foolish you are. The old man is overcome by our cousin's beauty. I do not wonder at it, for I myself have always been in love with the portrait. He has most likely never before seen such a face."

"Overcome by the heat, you mean, Dorothy. It is the hottest day we have had."

"What a picture he makes kneeling there. I wish I were an artist. If Guy were only here."

The whisperings of the two women seemed at last to reach the ears of Captain Burton. He started, slowly turned, and seeing the two ladies, wearily rose from his knees and advanced toward them. A shudder passed through his frame.

"Please excuse me! The face of the lady is somewhat like one I once came across, whose beauty impressed me strangely. I forgot where I was."

"Ah, certainly. Your name, I believe Peter said, was Captain Burton. Pray be seated, captain."

"Yes, I've come a long distance," said the old man, taking the chair nearest him; one which was placed with its back to the portrait.

"Yer relative, Mr. Guy Allston——"

"Cousin, Captain Burton," said both ladies together. "Mr. Allston is our cousin, he has no nearer relatives. But tell us what you know about him?" Miss Elizabeth continued.

"We have been so anxious as to his welfare, having not heard from him for months. He was much run down in health, had overworked himself, then there was also an unfortunate love affair. He gave us to understand that he would be gone until late in the autumn, and told us not to

expect to hear from him as he did not wish to take a pen in hand during his vacation. Thus, at first, we did not worry. It was only as the weeks melted into months and he did not return, that we began to grow anxious."

"Did Mr. Allston not say to where he was goin'?"

"No, he gave us no idea, and we have been greatly upset by the dreadful suspense. We have tried every method we could think of to find something concerning his whereabouts."

"Ladies, I fear I bring yer only sad tidin's. Ye'll never be able to find yer cousin, he is dead."

"Dead!" cried both. "No, not dead, Captain Burton! It can not be true!"

"Aye! aye! ladies, it's a sad tale, but I will tell yer all from beginnin' to end."

The captain then began and slowly related the history of the young man's life from the time when he came to Duck Island asking for board, until the last sad tragedy. When he ceased speaking both women were weeping bitterly.

"Thank you, Captain Burton, so much," sobbed Miss Dorothy. "It was good of you in your own deep sorrow to come and seek us out."

"It would only have been my Theo's wish that I should come. Yer see she loved Mr. Allston. She always thought of every one. After I got over the illness, and on my legs again, it seemed

to me her voice was always urgin' me on to find yer out and tell yer. Yer see, Mr. Allston often talked about his cousins, and I knew the name, but I had very little money or strength, and someone told me it was a long journey ; now and then a kind person would give me a lift, and so I got here."

He wiped his forehead with his ragged handkerchief.

" You must stay here over night and rest, Captain Burton," said Miss Dorothy.

" No, not here ! " He glanced at the picture and shuddered. " Not in this house. I must push on and make my way westward. I can find there work to do. Thank yer for yer kindness."

" You must have something to strengthen you. You are not strong enough to start again on your journey ; " she rang the bell.

Peter was ordered to bring in some cold meat, tea, and bread and butter.

The captain, although he tried to partake of some of the dainties, made but a poor attempt, and after a little, rose from his chair. Turning to the ladies, he said :

" I thank yer for your kind hospitality. I'm sorry to have given yer so much trouble, but I must be goin' now."

" Much trouble ! " said Miss Dorothy. " Why it's you who have taken the trouble, tramping it

all the way from Portsmouth, to bring us the sad news."

She hastily left the room, but soon returned; in her hands was an envelope.

"Take this, Captain Burton, if you feel you can not remain with us. We thank you for your thought of us and should you need anything you must write after you reach the West, and let us know how you are doing."

"Thank yer, ladies, for your kindness, but the money I can not take. I'm an old man and 'twon't be long now before I join my wife and daughter. Life here is very dreary to me."

They were standing in the doorway and he on the low veranda.

"Good bye! God bless yer!" and stretching out his hard hand to both, he passed down the steps into the twilight. The sisters lingered, watching the bent figure, until a cloud of dust hid him from view.

* * * * *

On and on Captain Burton plodded. Day after day passed. His one wish seemed to be to reach the West. He would go to Michigan, where they told him he would find work.

One night, late in the summer, the people of a town in Michigan found a gray-haired man lying in an unconscious condition by the roadside. His

clothes were in tatters. Concluding him to be a worn-out tramp, they carried him to an almshouse. Here they cared for the unknown stranger. Among the papers in his ragged jacket pocket, they found one which gave his name as Captain Burton.

The tramp appeared to be suffering from a low fever. After many weary days, at last the crisis came.

It was midnight, a candle was dimly burning on a stand near the low cot. The matron sat by the old man's bedside, her kind eyes fixed on his worn and wrinkled face, as it lay so white and pinched on the pillow.

Turning to the doctor, she said in a low voice:

"He looks as if he'd seen a heap of trouble, now don't he, doctor? He ain't said if his folks is livin' or not, like as not he's had a history, from the looks of him."

"Poor fellow, he can not live long. In a half hour's time he will probably become conscious, and then perhaps remain so until the end. One never knows what to expect. From his own lips we may learn something as to the old fellow's history."

"He's a sailor or has been one, I'm thinkin'; for see, doctor, how tattooed his right hand is. When he first come in here, he wore the remains of a black kid glove on it, as if he was kinder ashamed, and wanted to hide it."

Captain Burton's worn hands were lying on the white spread, and the one the matron alluded to, was covered with strange pictures. There was a ship, a cross, and the words, "The sea holds its own secrets," pricked deeply into the flesh.

"I wonder why he wore the glove. He seems a different kind of man from the regular tramps who are brought here, Mrs. Stephens."

"Yes, but there's a mystery hangs over him, and what it is, I can't for the life of me guess."

CHAPTER X.

"Wouldst thou," so the helmsman answered,
"Learn the secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery!"

IT was morning. The eyes of the sick man slowly opened. The patient matron still sat by his bedside. He motioned to her saying:

"I'm very ill, I'm goin' to die. Will yer please call a minister. There's things lyin' heavily on my conscience, which before I go, I must confess."

The woman rose from her chair, and opening the door into the hall, she called one of the inmates, who had been sitting up through the night, ready to help her if needed.

"Jim," she said, "I wish you'd go quickly for Mr. Canfield, the Methodist minister. He's accustomed to come here and is always mighty good and accommodatin'. Tell him there's a pauper here that's dyin' fast, and wants to see a preacher."

Captain Burton lay with half-opened eyes, which already the finger of death had touched. A white film appeared to be slipping over them. His hair was brushed back from his brow by the matron,

who from time to time wiped away the death sweat which stood in drops upon it. His face had that drawn, pinched look, which we know so well. The old man's hands were crossed, the nails were turning blue.

"Is the minister come?" he whispered. "Tell them to hurry, please."

"Drink this, captain, 'twill give you strength." She forced between his lips a teaspoon of brandy.

Just then the door opened, and the minister entered. The woman respectfully rose.

"Mr. Canfield," she whispered, "you're just in time. I thought he wouldn't hold out until yer got here, he's dyin' that fast."

"May I stop in the room?" she said looking at the sick man.

"No, I only want the minister, please."

She left the ward. Mr. Canfield took the seat just vacated. Bending over the dying man in a grave but sympathetic voice, he enquired:

"You have something you desire to tell me before you stand in the presence of your Judge, our Heavenly Father?"

"Aye! aye! sir, I have. Are we alone?" His eyes wandered restlessly around the room. "I'm dyin', I know. I've a story to tell yer, which I want written down and put into print. All the world must know it—everythin'. Please don't interrupt me, for I've but a short time to finish

my story. You've heard of Aaron Burr and of his daughter, Mrs. Allston, her name was 'Theodosia.' ”

Mr. Canfield started. “ Her father, nor governor Allston, never knew what became of wife or daughter. I was a lad of fourteen, an orphan, American-born and brought up to the sea. Was put on board a pirate vessel, the captain's name I've sworn never to tell. When Mrs. Allston set sail from Charleston, South Carolina, yer know she was comin' North to visit her father. She'd lost her son, and his death had been a terrible sorrow to her, I heard.

“ Mrs. Allston was accompanied by a Mr. Timothy Ruggles Green ; they told me afterwards that was his name. He was a lawyer from New York, and had a wife and five children livin'. He'd gone to Columbia to see about property there, and bein' a friend of the Burrs and Allstons, the governor placed his wife under Mr. Green's care. The vessel they were goin' on was named the *Patriot*. She had been a privateering cruiser and had her guns stowed below. At that time, it took five or six days to reach New York. 'Twas on December the twenty-ninth, 1812, when the *Patriot* sailed. I, with some of the sailors from our vessel, was loungin' around on the wharf, lookin' curiously at the great chests that Mrs. Allston was takin' away with her. Some said they were packed with

family plate and jewels. After the *Patriot* sailed, our captain ordered us aboard our own vessel, and we also soon set sail. We kept close in the wake of the *Patriot*. When off Cape Hatteras we opened fire and attacked her. The fight was short. We boarded her, made the captain and crew walk the plank, and all the passengers, all but Mr. Green and Mrs. Allston." A change came over the dying man's face and he faintly said :

"More brandy, please." He then continued :

"When it came their turn, Tom Brown, one of the sailors, was ordered to come forward and tip the plank. Mr. Green was to go first. He was a fine lookin' gentleman, very courtly. He begged the captain to spare his life, sayin' his wife and children needed him. But our captain was a hard, wicked man. He swore a fearful oath, then ordered Mr. Green to step on the plank. This he did without a murmur. He took off his watch, which, with a few papers, he handed to Tom Brown, askin' him to send them to his wife, givin' her address. Kneelin' down, Mr. Green prayed for his family, for the lady in his charge, and for the souls of his murderers. Then solemnly he repeated the words, 'Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' I can't ever forget the way he said it. A nod from the captain, and Tom Brown tipped the plank. There was a splash, and all was over.

"Mrs. Allston was the next victim." He shuddered. "She was a beautiful woman, more like a queen than any one I've ever seen. She stood before our captain, and implored him to save her for the sake of her husband and her beloved father. A tear came into our captain's eye, the first I ever saw there.

"'If I'm to die,' she exclaimed (I remember every word and the tone in which she said 'em), 'I'll die like the daughter of Aaron Burr. Allow me to go down into my cabin for a few moments.'

"She disappeared, but soon returned dressed in white, with her Bible pressed to her bosom. She looked like an angel, as she stood there before her murderers. The captain turned away, wicked man as he was, he could not face that woman. He looked more like the accused than the accuser. He glanced cowardly about him in all directions, as if wavering from his purpose; but seeing an amused smile creeping over the face of one of the most villainous of his crew, he turned, and gazin' resolutely at Tom Brown, said coldly:

"Mrs. Allston, I can't save yer. It goes against my principles." The sailors shrank away, a superstitious terror seemed to take possession of them.

"Mrs. Allston was commanded to step on the plank, as Mr. Green had done before her, and the captain nodded to Tom Brown. We all knew what his nod meant.

“‘Captain, I can’t do it. I’ve allers minded yer afore, but I can’t now—not if yer hang me for it,’ and Tom Brown fell back among the group of sailors. I was a lad then of fourteen. I was standin’ with the men. The enraged captain swore a horrible oath, and shaking his fist in the faces of all, he cried :

“‘ You’re cowards, all of you. Anthony Burton, you’re only a boy, and boys haven’t souls. I command yer when I give the word, to tip that plank ! ’

“Once again Mrs. Allston pleaded for her life. Captain,’ she cried, ‘spare me, oh spare me. My husband and father will richly reward you.’ He answered, ‘No, woman, your hour is come.’ There was no pity or compassionate look on that hard and wicked face. She continued, ‘If I must die, I will die, as I said before, like the daughter of Aaron Burr.’ The captain glanced at me; oh God, how could I take a human life ! I tipped the plank, and without a cry, the beautiful woman sank under the waves.”

Strength seemed to be given to the old man, as he tremblingly held up his tattooed right hand. “It was yer who did it, false hand, ’twas yer. I marked yer for life. The sea has held its secret, all these years. But now, before I go, I must tell it.”

There were tears in the eyes of the minister as he

said, "Anthony Burton, have you repented of this fearful crime?"

"Aye, aye, sir! God only knows the suffering it has caused me. There's more. The captain of our vessel was himself afterward put to death by his men. We mutinied, and divided the gold amongst us. There was enough to make us all rich men. I had my full share of the booty, but 'twas the price of blood. I sinned in usin' it."

"My Theo and my beloved wife were ignorant of all. I guess now they know. My secret seemed too much for me to keep. It grew to be a heavy load. Peace of mind left me. Before me I saw always the face of Mrs. Allston, whom I had murdered. The only man whom I trusted with my secret, whose crazy wife I cared for, robbed me of all. At the last burning my house to the ground.

"My daughter, our guest, the wretch with his wife, all perished in the flames. In the hour when I was alone and forsaken, I found forgiveness. That's my story; may God have mercy on me!"

A knock at the door sounded. "Come in," answered the minister.

The door slowly opened and the matron stood by the sick man's bedside.

"There's a woman, Captain Burton, would like to see yer."

"A woman," the old man slowly repeated, "a woman? I know no woman."

At this moment a figure, dressed in black, and heavily veiled, entered the room. She stood at the foot of his bed.

Slowly lifting her veil from her scarred and seamed face, she glanced at the old man, and with a cry of joy, threw herself on the floor at his side.

"Father, do you not know your Theo? I did not perish in the flames."

The old man started forward.

"My child! My child! Is this heaven? Am I dreamin'? Tell me all! My child! My child!"

"Father, the floor gave way, I fell with the others. But a merciful providence protected me. Only my face and hands were badly burned. I made my way to the woodhouse. Two of the walls were already on fire, and a burning timber falling on the floor had set fire to the boards. While all exit was cut off, and expecting death at any moment, to my great joy I saw an opening in the rocky foundations. There were steps cut in the stone. I made my way down these. They led to a cave. Faint and suffering, I crawled into it; here I lay for many hours. I could hear above me the hissing of the flames, the falling and cracking of timbers,—but I was saved. At last all was quiet like the grave. I knew it was all over and that I should see Guy never again on

earth," she sobbed. "I thought you perished with the rest, my father. Suffering from my burns, weak and exhausted from lack of food, the next day I crawled out of my hiding place. There were two strangers standing on our landing. They were examining the dory that Dr. Blacksheath had come in. I saw a pleasure yacht not far away. When these gentlemen perceived me, they started, thinking me to be a ghost. I motioned to them, being too weak to call. Then I fainted, and knew nothing more until I found myself in a hospital ward. My kind nurse told me I had been very, very ill; for days and weeks, I had hovered between life and death. Gradually I grew better. Only a short time ago, I was able to leave the hospital. I had made a few friends, one of them was from this place. She insisted upon bringing me home with her. I heard accidentally of the almshouse and came here to visit it. The matron told me an old man was dying. I asked if I might see him, and found,—my father!"

She stopped. Captain Burton was breathing heavily. With difficulty, he raised his tattooed hand, and laid it upon her head.

"My Theo, yer've found your father, but he's not the same. He—he—is—at last—forgiven." And raising his hand heavenward, he whispered, "The sea kept its secret. The waves are callin' to me,—callin' all the time. Do you not hear

them as they dash on Shag and Mingo? They're—callin'—me—home."

His head fell back upon the pillow, and Theo, kneeling there, knew that her father's soul had embarked upon the ocean of eternity.

She laid her poor scarred hand softly upon his eyelids, and closed them. There was a peace resting on her father's face, which she had never seen there before. It was the peace which follows forgiveness, "the peace which passeth all understanding."

FINIS.





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